

Daily Press Briefing: Discussion on the Ukraine

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August 14, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC

QUESTION: So do you have any update on this aid convoy that the Russians are sending to Ukraine?

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: Do you have any new conversations?

MS. HARF: Just a little bit, not a ton of an update. The talks are ongoing right now for Russia to facilitate the delivery of aid to the Ukrainian border. It's my understanding they have stopped for the night and may be – I think tomorrow or Saturday – we're not sure on the exact timing when they might arrive at the border. But needless to say, Russia has no right to send vehicles or persons or cargo of any kind into Ukraine without the government's explicit permission. I've said that before.

I'd also note that the Government of Ukraine is providing its own humanitarian aid. Yesterday, they dispatched 75 trucks to Luhansk, carrying approximately 800 tons of humanitarian aid. We are calling on the Russian-backed separatists who currently control Luhansk to let the people have access to that aid.

So the conversations are ongoing. Basically, the same principles apply – customs check, all of the same things we've said still apply. And we'll keep watching it.

QUESTION: Okay, great. So at the same time, it seems like the city of Donetsk has come under some heavy shelling --

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: -- apparently by Ukrainian forces. Do you have any comment on that?

MS. HARF: We do. We're watching that. Obviously, we've stressed the importance of showing restraint to minimize casualties among the civilian – the local population. Ukrainian forces are seeking to dislodge the separatists from Luhansk and Donetsk. The separatists, as we've seen, have chosen to operate from heavily populated areas. We've called on the Ukrainians to take every step to avoid the local population as they try to free the city from the separatists.

QUESTION: But do you support the specific use of heavy artillery that could carry the risk of civilian casualties in order to do that?

MS. HARF: We've called on them not to use weapons that could increase that. But again, we're very supportive of the Ukrainians here. It's a tough fight they're in, and we do think that the ultimate goal here needs to be these cities not being under the control of the separatists.

QUESTION: Okay. And then the last one from me was: Do you have any comment on President Putin's visit to Crimea and the session of the Duma that he convened there? He gave a big speech.

MS. HARF: Well, from what I hear, he's the only tourist that's actually gone there this summer. Their tourism industry, I think, has – I'm being serious.

QUESTION: How long have you been waiting to use that?

MS. HARF: All briefing. (Laughter.) All briefing I've been – (laughter). Actually, the one they gave me to use was much worse. It was a much worse joke. Sorry, EUR press people, because I like this one better.

No, but it sure – actually, their tourism industry has completely plummeted since the Russian invasion. People aren't going there. It's – their economy is faltering because of it, which is a huge burden, actually, on Russia, who has annexed it. So I don't have much more comment than that.

QUESTION: So State Department officials aren't waiting in line to buy Crimea t-shirts with Putin's face on them? Is that a fair assumption?

MS. HARF: Are those real?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. HARF: That's incredible and disgusting.

...

QUESTION: Yeah, Russia – Russia and Ukraine. I have a question about assurance measures that the U.S. is taking to NATO countries along the Russian border. Specifically, I'm asking about Estonia, which – whose foreign ministry confirmed that President Obama is going to be visiting Estonia sometime in the near future. There needs to be – we don't have the details yet, but the Estonian foreign ministry has confirmed that. Do you have any comment on that?

MS. HARF: Well, I don't have any comment on reports of potential travel. We have taken a number of steps to demonstrate our commitment to our NATO allies. We have doubled – more than doubled our contribution to NATO's Baltic Air Policing Mission. Since May, Poland, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and France have been contributing fighter jets to Baltic Air Policing. This mission is now flown from Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland. All 28 allies have now contributed to the reassurance mission. We sent the Black Sea rotational force of 200 Marines to

Romania, deployed F-16s to Poland, are just working in a number of ways to reassure our allies. I can see if there's anything more specific on Estonia for you.

QUESTION: Yeah, but there's not just the question about the visit of President Obama, but also reports of the U.S. sending a rotation of tanks and armored vehicles for a three-month period for some sort of --

MS. HARF: I can check on that. I don't -- I'm not aware of that specific. Let me check for you.

QUESTION: Okay, thank you.

MS. HARF: Yes, Lara.

QUESTION: So, in the last reports I saw about this Russian aid convoy said it was going to a checkpoint on the border that was controlled by the separatists. I'm just --

MS. HARF: What we've said is it needs to be a checkpoint agreed to by Ukraine. So --

QUESTION: And if they don't do that, if they go to one that's controlled by separatists and they get --

MS. HARF: Well, it may end up actually being one controlled by -- I'm not sure exactly which one they're heading towards.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: But the Government of Ukraine needs to agree to it.

QUESTION: Understood. But assuming they -- assuming -- again, the last reports I saw was that they were --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- headed towards one that was controlled by the separatists, meaning that they would almost certainly get in. I'm just wondering if there -- what kind of discussions have been had in the interagency to support the Ukrainian forces to prevent that from happening?

MS. HARF: Well, in terms of the hypothetical if they were to get in without going through customs?

QUESTION: Yes, if they were to go in through a separatist checkpoint.

MS. HARF: Well, they're --

QUESTION: Without Ukrainian Government approval.

MS. HARF: And without customs and – because the checklist – regardless of where they cross, it just needs to be approved by the Government of Ukraine and they need to go through all these steps.

QUESTION: I mean, I'm assuming if they're going through the separatist checkpoints, they're evading going through the checklist.

MS. HARF: Fair enough. I don't have any specifics to outline for you on what our response to be. I can guess it would be a fairly serious one. We've made that very clear to the Russians they should not move these trucks in without taking all of the steps the Ukrainian Government has outlined, and we'll watch it going forward. And if and when that happens, we can talk about our response.

QUESTION: Well, what does "serious" mean? Does it say – does it mean don't do that or does it mean sanctions or does it mean --

MS. HARF: I don't have any more specifics for you.

QUESTION: -- military? Okay.

QUESTION: Can I --

...

QUESTION: Over the weekend, ExxonMobil started drilling in the Kara Sea as part of a longstanding relationship with Rosneft, which was sanctioned last month. And while the sanction is very narrow, it restricts the energy company from obtaining basically any U.S. market financing for its operations. I'm wondering whether there's something untoward or unseemly about a U.S. firm still engaged with a company that has been sanctioned by the U.S. Government and whose president and CEO has also been sanctioned by the U.S. Government.

MS. HARF: In this case, I would not say that. We trust U.S. companies are abiding by the recent measures – as you said, it's fairly narrowly written – fairly narrowly written – and trust that U.S. companies are monitoring developments carefully as they make decisions about doing business there.

QUESTION: What advice or guidance does the State Department provide apart from what Treasury provides to U.S. firms that have longstanding business relationships with persons or entities that end up being sanctioned?

MS. HARF: Well, if the sanctions come from the State Department, then we provide all of the information for businesses about what they can and can't do. And if they come from Treasury, Treasury provides it. We basically just outline very clearly what they can and can't do under sanctions and trust that businesses will make their own decisions beyond that.

QUESTION: What is the follow-up or what's the supervision to make sure that U.S. companies are complying with the letter of the law?

MS. HARF: Very robust between here and the Treasury Department at OFAC. Very robust oversight of what our companies and people are doing.

August 13, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Do you have anything to say about the Russian convoy – the humanitarian convoy into Ukraine?

MS. HARF: Yes. So we understand that talks are ongoing for Russia to facilitate the delivery of aid to the Ukrainian border. All parties are coordinating separate with the ICRC. We're watching right now – I think they're still a couple days from actually getting to the border. We don't know what's in the trucks. Clearly, we have some concerns, but what I want to underscore is that nothing can happen without the permission of the Ukrainian Government, that they have the final say on the modalities around this delivery. So any assistance delivered through Russia must, as I said yesterday, pass appropriate customs clearances, be placed under ICRC control as agreed by the parties entering Ukraine. So what that looks like on the ground is being discussed between the parties right now, but nothing can happen without the express consent, permission, decisions made, by Kyiv.

QUESTION: All right. Do you find it sufficient or can you confirm what Mr. Lavrov said that they have coordinated or they have reached an agreement with the Ukrainian Government?

MS. HARF: Well, I'd refer you to them about any direct agreement. We know they've been in discussions about how this might work. But again, the fundamentals of what I said yesterday still hold that the Ukrainian Government has made clear its requirements: border crossing approved by the Ukrainian Government, appropriate customs clearances; ICRC must take custody before it enters Ukraine. All of those things still remain in place. I think we have a little bit of time before they get to the border. So those discussions will be ongoing and we will certainly be watching.

QUESTION: Did you get clarity on the issue that I think I asked about yesterday about whether the stuff would have to be put on different vehicles?

MS. HARF: That's a decision for the Ukraine – again, all the decisions on this are the Ukrainian Government's. I don't know if they've spoken about this. I'm sure that's one of the topics still under discussion.

August 12, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC

QUESTION: So Russia sent an aid convoy this morning bound for Ukraine. Is that something that you're supporting?

MS. HARF: Well, we understand that talks are underway for Russia to deliver the aid to the Ukrainian border where it would be transferred to the custody of the ICRC. Ukraine confirmed with us directly today its readiness to facilitate the arrival of the aid and arrange for its delivery to Luhansk so long as the shipment is received at a border crossing point controlled by the Ukrainian Government in Kharkiv, it passes appropriate customs clearances, that the ICRC takes custody and responsibility for the delivery in Ukraine, and that Russian-backed separatists allow safe access for the delivery of the aid.

We do support this proposal as I just outlined it and as the Ukrainian Government confirmed with us, and call for its swift implementation.

Russia has no right to move into Ukrainian unilaterally, whether under the guise of humanitarian convoys or any other pretext, without Kyiv's permission.

So we have spoken to the Ukrainians today. They have a plan in place that they feel comfortable with; we feel comfortable with it as well. And now the Russians need to deliver, no pun intended.

QUESTION: Are you confident that this convoy has humanitarian supplies? Because there's been this concern, as you've been saying, that this is a pretext for some kind of --

MS. HARF: Right.

QUESTION: -- invasion. But do you think that this, on face value, is what it is?

MS. HARF: Well, we don't know. And that's -- and we do have concerns. And that's why, as we've said today, if it goes through all of these steps, then we would support this, if it goes through this Ukrainian Government-controlled border crossing, if it passes through customs clearance, if the ICRC takes custody and responsibility for it. So if it goes through, again, those things I just outlined and passes all of those, then sure. But nothing can be done under the guise of humanitarian assistance here that is anything other than what they claim it is.

QUESTION: Marie, the way I saw the --

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS. HARF: Let's go here and then I'll come back to you.

QUESTION: The way I saw the Ukrainians talking about this themselves, they said that – and you may be alluding to this when you talk about the ICRC taking custody.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: But they said that the humanitarian goods would be transferred at the border onto different vehicles. In other words, they don't want Russian vehicles going in.

MS. HARF: I don't have that detail here. That might – that makes sense. I just don't have that in front of me. But it does have to be transferred to ICRC – has to be.

QUESTION: Mm-hmm. I mean, I guess what I'm trying to get at is whether you would oppose – as the Ukrainians say they oppose – Russian vehicles going onto their territory.

MS. HARF: I'll check with the folks who talked to the Ukrainians today and see if that was part of the conversation. Again, we have outlined here with them what they considered appropriate, and we agreed. So I can check and see if that's what they --

QUESTION: Thanks.

QUESTION: Has the – can I just (inaudible)? Has the ICRC (a) agreed to this, and (b), what's the readout you've gotten from the Russians on this proposal?

MS. HARF: Let me check on the ICRC piece. I'm guessing they have, but I don't know specifically. I don't have any readout of what the Russians have said they will or will not do. I just know what we are calling on them to do.

QUESTION: Thanks.

QUESTION: Are you in contact with the Russians about this?

MS. HARF: We have been. I don't have any specifics to read out.

QUESTION: Uh-huh. Are you still concerned that this would be pretext for a military action?

MS. HARF: Well, we're concerned that it could be. And that's why we felt like there is a humanitarian situation in the east that needs addressing. So if this convoy goes through all those things I just laid out, we would be comfortable with it going forward. We don't want it to be a pretext for anything else.

QUESTION: Mm-hmm. Do you think the Ukrainian Government bears any responsibility for the humanitarian --

MS. HARF: Not at all. This humanitarian situation did not exist before the Russians intervened in eastern Ukraine. It just did not exist. It is a direct result of Russia's intervention.

Yes.

QUESTION: Change of topic?

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: Egypt. Human Rights Watch said today that Egypt's security forces likely committed crimes against humanity when it crushed Islamist protests last year, comparing the bloodshed to China's Tiananmen Square massacre and calling for a UN investigation into the role of President al-Sisi and his security chiefs. How do you view this report?

MS. HARF: We have seen the report. I believe it was just released this morning, and we're currently reviewing it. Our initial reaction is that the report's findings are very disturbing. At the time of the violence last year, which was around this time last year, President Obama strongly condemned the steps taken by the Egyptian Government and security forces, and deplored the violence against civilians. It was at this time that we decided to hold delivery of several weapon systems.

It's troubling that one year later, no security forces have been held accountable in events that resulted in the deaths of approximately a thousand Egyptians. And as we've said many, many times, in order for Egypt to achieve long-term stability, security, economic prosperity, it must investigate these events in a fully transparent and credible manner, one that's grounded in impartial application of the rule of law, and to hold people accountable.

QUESTION: Do you support a UN investigation into the role of President Sisi?

MS. HARF: Well, again, we're just reviewing the report and don't have any additional recommendations to make at this time.

QUESTION: But the Egyptians have rejected the report today and criticizes its bias, and called the Human Rights Watch as unprofessional for relying on anonymous and unreliable accounts and twisting the truth.

MS. HARF: Well, I don't think that you needed any anonymous sources to see what happened in the streets of Egypt last August. We saw it; President Obama talked about it. Approximately a thousand Egyptians died because of it. So we're reviewing the report. We've made our position on this very clear.

QUESTION: How full-throated should the investigation of those responsible be?

MS. HARF: We believe --

QUESTION: Should it rise all the way to now-President Sisi?

MS. HARF: Well, I don't have any more details about what the investigation should look like, other than we believe all of these situations that have occurred there should be fully investigated.

QUESTION: Was there any – in light of this initial read of the report, is there any misgiving or regret on the part of the U.S. Government for releasing some of the military aid that was held back a year ago?

MS. HARF: No. Look, we have made decisions about our policy towards Egypt based on what's in our national security interests, as they have made some limited progress. Some – I would stress some and limited. But we have made decisions based on what's in our security interests and how we can help, but we've also, as we've said, held some things back even today as well.

QUESTION: How do you view President Sisi's visit to Russia, especially that he was invited to attend the African Leaders Summit in Washington and he didn't – he didn't come?

MS. HARF: Well, look, Egypt is free to have relationships with whoever it wants. We have a relationship with Egypt that's based on unique capabilities we bring to bear, certainly in the security side, but also on the economic reform side as well. So we believe we have a strong and strategic relationship, and don't have much more analysis beyond that.

QUESTION: Marie, the report is quite critical of the U.S. and EU for its decisions to continue providing aid to Egypt. Are you – is there any discussion of reevaluating U.S. aid to Egypt as a result of the findings of this report?

MS. HARF: Well, at the time the instances in the report happened, we did hold – we put all of our assistance on hold, we reviewed everything on the books. Everyone remembers we talked about that quite a bit in this room. We held the delivery of certain weapon systems and we reevaluated all of it. And there is still some things that have not been certified even today that – basically the clause that talks about their advance in democratization and their progress there. So this is an ongoing process, but we took very serious steps in response to what happened. I don't think this report will change what we've done in any way, but we're certainly very disturbed by what's in it.

QUESTION: Do you agree with the wording – sorry – that the crackdown was premeditated, systematic, and indiscriminate?

MS. HARF: Well, we're still reviewing the report. But one of the reasons we said there need to be full investigations here is because we want to get all the facts. I can't stand up here and tell you whether this was all premeditated. I can tell you that we saw civilians being killed in the streets of Egypt, which, as the President said at the time, meant that business as usual could not continue. I remember those words distinctly being said at this time last year.

QUESTION: The aid that's – the U.S. aid to Egypt that's still being withheld, is that being withheld by the Administration or by Congress?

MS. HARF: By the Administration. We have not yet certified the last certification we have to make in the – and this is not a technical term – I’m sorry – it’s one of the sub-parts of it on progress towards democratization.

QUESTION: Do you know how much that amounts to?

MS. HARF: I knew that was the next question, and I’m sorry, I don’t.

QUESTION: Okay. Can you take that?

MS. HARF: I will check.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: Well, can I – just one last question?

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: Do you have confidence that the Egyptians will hold those who have committed crimes – are you confident that they will hold those accountable? And to what extent are you having direct conversations with Egyptians on this incident?

MS. HARF: Well, it’s troubling that one year later no security forces have been held accountable. That is troubling to us, particularly when there were about a thousand Egyptians who died. So we need to see things be done a little bit differently and see some more progress made here, and we are having that conversation.

QUESTION: And to what extent might this report impact U.S.-Egyptian relations going forward?

MS. HARF: Well, as I said, we’ve been looking at what happened last August and July since last August and July. This report is certainly an important part of that discussion, but we’ve made decisions based on this for many, many months now. I don’t think that this will change that, but it’s certainly a key effort to document what happened here and to call on the Egyptians to investigate it.

QUESTION: In light of the savageness – if that’s a word – of the killing --

MS. HARF: Savagery?

QUESTION: The savagery of the killing of these people – shot in the face, shot in the chest --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- deliberately shoot to kill, what is the U.S. Government's message to the Egyptian people that some kind of justice can be had for their loved ones?

MS. HARF: Well, I think when you hear the President stand up and say what he said about this last year and what we've said since then, that we really need the Government of Egypt to hold people accountable here and we will continue pushing them to do so. We can't do it for them, but the people who lost loved ones who were killed or injured deserve that. And if Egypt is going to have a fully prosperous, better future, they really need to take these kind of steps, or else they won't.

QUESTION: A lot of these people who were in Rabaa Square were there because they felt that the democratic process that they had tried to establish had been subverted with the coup on July 3rd. What more can the U.S. do to support the Egyptian people's aspirations for what they view as a fair democracy?

MS. HARF: Well, this is a conversation, Roz, we've had for many, many months now. And last July when we saw what happened with the military, we were very clear and then took steps to back it up with our displeasure. So we have certain levers we can bring to bear here. We have. We will continue to have the conversations. I don't have more analysis on it to do for you than that.

QUESTION: Is the President prepared to enact more pressure on the Egyptian Government, especially if time passes and no one is brought in to question?

MS. HARF: I don't have any policy steps to outline for you about what we might or might not do. I know, again, we're looking at the report and we'll evaluate going forward.

Scott.

QUESTION: Burma?

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: What can you tell us about the circumstances surrounding the arrangements made for the Secretary's lodging at the --

MS. HARF: Thank you for the question. I know there's been some confusion --

QUESTION: -- ASEAN Regional Forum?

MS. HARF: -- including on Twitter, on this today. So let's clear it up here.

So for the ministerial meeting, the foreign ministry assigned hotels to delegations there. The ministry assigned the Lake Garden Hotel to the U.S. delegation. The hotel itself is not sanctioned. The local owner is on an SDN list, but under U.S. law, the IEEPA -- which is the law that governs how sanctions are implemented in Burma -- includes an exemption for activities

related to travel, including hotel accommodations. That's for U.S. private citizens, U.S. businessmen or women, and U.S. Government officials. So if you are – basically how it was explained to me, you can stay at this hotel no matter who you are, you just can't do business with it. So if you wanted to sell them towels, you could not do that but you could stay there.

QUESTION: But don't you think the --

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

(Laughter.)

MS. HARF: There's a difference in the law.

QUESTION: All right, okay. Well, even if it's --

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS. HARF: Oh, can we ask one question at a time --

QUESTION: Even if --

MS. HARF: -- or is there going to be pure anarchy in here today?

QUESTION: It is going to be anarchy on this, on this important --

MS. HARF: Elise is leading in the coup here.

QUESTION: The inmates are running the asylum.

MS. HARF: Well, but when there are things being said that the hotel's blacklisted, that's just not the case.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: We need to be very clear when we talk about sanctions what is and isn't sanctioned.

QUESTION: Fine.

MS. HARF: This hotel was assigned to our delegation. We complied with all laws. And we have pushed very strongly with the Burmese Government to take actions to reform, to reform in a number of ways that address the issues that underpin our sanctions.

QUESTION: No doubt.

MS. HARF: So we raised those, including during our meetings bilaterally in Burma.

QUESTION: No doubt. But --

MS. HARF: But -- I know there's a "but" coming, Elise.

QUESTION: Don't you think though that just that the appearance and the perception of staying at this hotel sends a wrong message?

MS. HARF: I don't.

QUESTION: I mean, yes, maybe you're -- maybe you're complying to the letter of the U.S. law, but what about the spirit in which the sanctions were put and the U.S. values that they represent?

MS. HARF: Okay, Elise.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Let's take a step back.

QUESTION: Okay. Let's take a step back.

MS. HARF: We've been very clear how strongly we feel about the values that underpin our sanctions towards Burma. They were raised repeatedly with Burmese officials. The notion that we need to take steps to reform -- because eventually, obviously, we want them to take steps so we can remove sanctions. And they have made some progress. This in no way changes how deeply we care about the things that made these sanctions enacted in the first place.

QUESTION: But if you're --

MS. HARF: And I don't think staying at a hotel that itself is not sanctioned in any way changes that.

QUESTION: But how do you --

MS. HARF: I really don't.

QUESTION: You don't think that (inaudible)?

QUESTION: (Inaudible) people pay to stay isn't going to benefit from it? What Lara said.

MS. HARF: I'm sorry.

QUESTION: The owner of the hotel is going to benefit financially from --

MS. HARF: Well, there's ways sanctions are put in place. And I know you all have opinions on what the sanctions should say, but the sanctions as written make very clear that Americans can

stay there. And if we felt like that would be helpful to sanction as well, I would have guessed that we would have sanctioned that as well.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: But it's not an interpretation of the law. This is just common sense. If you --

MS. HARF: No, it's actually -- and you don't get -- the funny thing about the way the law is written is there are things you can and can't do. And everything we did is completely legal.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: If you're willing to -- sorry. If you're willing to comply -- just if you -- saying this complies with the letter of the law, it certainly doesn't comply with the spirit of the sanctions --

MS. HARF: It does actually, because sanctions are put in place on certain people for --

QUESTION: And you're staying at a hotel that is owned by --

MS. HARF: -- for doing certain things. If we had wanted to sanction the hotel, we could have done that too. And there's a reason, I'm sure, that we didn't.

QUESTION: But how does allowing this person to benefit --

MS. HARF: I think we might just have to agree to disagree on this.

QUESTION: -- encourage further reforms?

MS. HARF: Because when the Secretary of State and President Obama sit in Burma with Burmese leaders directly to their face and say you need to do more to reform, I think that makes the case much more clearly than where the Secretary sleeps when he overnights there.

QUESTION: But when he stays at the hotel after that meeting, it kind of a sends a wink-wink --

MS. HARF: Not at all.

QUESTION: -- to the government that yeah, well --

MS. HARF: Not at all. Not at all.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, we can agree --

MS. HARF: We can agree to disagree on this, Elise. And I think we've probably exhausted this topic.

QUESTION: I'm not exhausted.

QUESTION: Do you agree that the owner is financially benefitting?

QUESTION: I mean, do you think that – I mean, do you think that – do you know if the State Department was aware of these sanctions against this hotel owner--

MS. HARF: I can check.

QUESTION: -- at the time they were assigned the hotel?

MS. HARF: I can check. I don't.

QUESTION: Do you think if they did not know that they would have asked for a hotel change?

MS. HARF: There's like 15 hypotheticals there.

QUESTION: There's just two.

QUESTION: Can we – let me ask --

MS. HARF: I honestly – I will – to calm the masses, I will check with our team. I'm not meaning to be flip about this. We worked very hard. We're all being --

QUESTION: You're doing a pretty good job of it. (Laughter.)

MS. HARF: We're all being a little flip about this. But let's step back. Let me step back for a second and be serious. We worked very hard to put in place sanctions on Burma that we believed were a key part of helping get to a place where we are today where there has been quite amount of political and economic and commercial reform. We have much more to go. That was a huge topic of conversation the Secretary had when he was there.

So we've come a long way, as you know, with Burma in a broader context in the sanctions picture. And Lara's smiling at me, but it happens to be true. So whether or not Secretary Kerry stayed at the hotel that was assigned to him, which itself is not sanctioned, happened or not, that in no way changes our overall very comprehensive and robust policy towards Burma in pushing reform. And I think to suggest that it does is a little, to use my term, flip.

QUESTION: Hey, Marie? Can --

MS. HARF: So we can look into it a little more, but I don't probably have much more to add than that.

QUESTION: Can you just ask the simple question, with no hypotheticals: Did the U.S. Government ask to change the hotel once it was assigned to them?

MS. HARF: I'm guessing we didn't.

QUESTION: But can – I'm not --

MS. HARF: I don't even know if we knew.

QUESTION: I don't want to guess. I would like to --

MS. HARF: I actually – I would prefer to guess up here, Arshad. It's more preferable for me.

QUESTION: Well, your choice. You can guess all you want, but I'd be grateful if you'd ask.

MS. HARF: I'm kidding. I don't know if we knew.

QUESTION: Could you ask?

MS. HARF: I will endeavor to find out.

QUESTION: To clarify --

QUESTION: And just to follow up, you're saying that – there's a difference between selling towels and staying there.

MS. HARF: Doing business with --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: -- and there are specific exemptions that Congress wrote into the law that govern sanctions on Burma for travel or hotel accommodations.

QUESTION: Sure.

MS. HARF: They're in the law for a reason. If they didn't want it to be, it wouldn't have been.

QUESTION: Obviously, the Secretary isn't selling towels here. But the --

MS. HARF: Clearly.

QUESTION: But was there actually money exchanged?

MS. HARF: I'm sure we paid for our hotel rooms. I'm sure we didn't stay there for free.

QUESTION: The Burmese didn't host (inaudible)?

MS. HARF: Oh, they might've. I don't know. Let me check on that. That's a very good question. I don't know. Let me check. I'm guessing we paid. But again, there is a specific exemption under the law for hotel accommodations, period. And it was written that way, and we

have a lot of other sanctions in place in Burma, and some that we've lifted as well, as people know, with certain items over the past year.

QUESTION: So what's the intent on that? Is the thought process that even if the hotel owner gets the profit of people staying, that it --

MS. HARF: The intent on how it was written?

QUESTION: -- then it trickles down to the hotel staff? I mean --

MS. HARF: On the reason it was written that way?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. HARF: When it was first put into law?

QUESTION: Right. I mean, clearly the building's not going to profit.

MS. HARF: I don't know.

QUESTION: People profit, right?

MS. HARF: I -- in theory, yes.

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. HARF: I don't know why the sanctions law was written and amended the way that it was. I'm happy to check with our team, I really am, to see if there's more we can share on this. I'm a little --

QUESTION: Are you sure nobody was selling towels?

MS. HARF: I'm a little -- I mean, Jen Psaki, I don't know. You know. (Laughter.) No, guys.

I mean, look. You know how these things -- there's huge delegations, there's, what, 25 countries or something all in a place. So I think the government was endeavoring just to put people in hotels and get them set up where they needed to be, and I can check on if we knew and if we asked and --

QUESTION: I'm sure your very smart advance people did their homework to find out what was the background of this hotel.

MS. HARF: Well, and they may have checked and seen that the hotel was not, in fact, sanctioned.

QUESTION: Even though the owner was.

MS. HARF: But again, who knows what comes up when you do checks.

Scott.

QUESTION: Does the U.S. --

MS. HARF: Look at what can of worms you opened there.

QUESTION: Whatever.

MS. HARF: (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Does the U.S. Government do anything to help American businesspeople who are in Burma navigate what appear to be sometimes confusing regulations?

MS. HARF: We do, not just in -- with sanctions on Burma, quite frankly. With -- the sanctions we apply across the board, particularly the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Asset Control, OFAC, publishes very long online Qs & As every time new sanctions are put in place and for all existing ones, what you can do, what you can't do. They do a lot of outreach to the business community as well, particularly in countries where we've had a lot on the books, like Burma -- obviously Iran we do a lot, North Korea, other places as well, Russia now. So they do quite a bit of outreach to the business community. Yes, they do. And we do as well.

QUESTION: New topic? So during the ASEAN foreign minister meeting, the Chinese foreign minister for the first time brought up this new approach called dual-track approach to solve South China Sea problems. So the two tracks -- the first one is China and the relevant countries that are going to solve the problem directly and friendly. And the second track is to -- China is going to committed to maintain the peace and stability. Does the U.S. welcome this dual-track approach?

MS. HARF: Well, I'm not going to comment on what our private diplomatic conversations may have looked like with the Chinese during ASEAN. We have always supported the use of diplomatic and other peaceful means to manage and resolve disputes in the South China Sea. This can include arbitration, other international dispute settlement resolutions. We also, of course, believe that multilateral forums like this one are a very important place to discuss these issues and believe that that should continue to be the case, and don't have more comment on it than that.

QUESTION: But I mean, since this has been brought up --

MS. HARF: Well, we're not -- we don't discuss publicly what we discuss privately with the Chinese at ASEAN.

QUESTION: But as China implied, do you think the U.S. in the future will not weigh in the direct talk between ASEAN countries and China?

MS. HARF: I don't have more analysis on this to do for you. Again, I said what our position is, and we'll keep having the conversation with the Chinese.

Yes, Arshad.

QUESTION: Do you have any update on Ambassador Robert King's visit to China?

MS. HARF: I don't think I have any update. Let me see what I have in here. He is there between August 11th and 13th as part of regular consultations with senior Chinese officials on a range of human rights and humanitarian issues, obviously, given his portfolio as special envoy for North Korea human rights issues, so 11 through 13. I don't have any readout of his meetings yet for you.

Yes.

QUESTION: Just a housekeeping one: Do you have an update on date and time for the next session of Iran P5+1 negotiations?

MS. HARF: I don't, not more than I mentioned last week.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. HARF: We said we'll likely have a P5+1 and Iran plenary set of meetings before UNGA. Also, we'll likely have one at UNGA. I just don't have any updates for you.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Believe me, I wish I had some dates on the calendar I could give.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Yemen?

QUESTION: Yeah, Gaza.

MS. HARF: What were you going to ask?

QUESTION: Yemen.

MS. HARF: Okay.

QUESTION: News reports coming from Yemen saying that in the past year, dozens of Yemeni Americans visiting their homeland have had their U.S. passports summarily revoked or confiscated by the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a. Do you have anything --

MS. HARF: I have not seen that. Let me check. I don't know.

QUESTION: Please, thank you.

MS. HARF: Gaza?

QUESTION: Yeah. Any update on the cease-fire talks, any extension, any assistance that Mr. Lowenstein and others are providing?

MS. HARF: The cease-fire is still in place – let me get here – 72 hours, I think. We're about halfway through it if my math serves me. We urge both parties to respect it completely and hope they will continue to engage seriously to get to a longer-term agreement. Our immediate and top priority is to see an end to the rocket attacks and the tunnel threat from Hamas into Israel and an end to the suffering of the people of Gaza. Special Envoy Frank Lowenstein remains in Cairo. He's monitoring and advising in areas where we can be helpful, and that's pretty much all the update I have for today.

QUESTION: Well, can you talk a little bit more about now the reconstruction that's going to be needed in Gaza? Is this only going to be dealt with within these talks or is there some – going to be some kind of international or U.S.-led or any kind of mechanism to talk about the immense reconstruction that once again is going to be needed?

MS. HARF: I don't – yeah, no, it's a good question. I don't know if it's part of these talks. I think these talks have been focused exclusively on how to get a more sustainable cease-fire in place.

QUESTION: Right. Well, but – I mean, so who's going to --

MS. HARF: I can ask the question of Frank and the team.

QUESTION: Yeah. I mean, who is going to rebuild Gaza? The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that the international community was sick of having to rebuild Gaza every time the Israelis destroyed it and so --

MS. HARF: Let – no, it's a good question. Let me check and see if there are conversations and who would sort of have (inaudible).

QUESTION: Is there a kind of donors conference? Like, what --

MS. HARF: It's a, again, good question. I just don't have any details, but let me see if I can get you some for tomorrow.

QUESTION: Right, because I'm assuming it wouldn't – first of all, if it's not being dealt with within these talks – but these talks don't have to be over for that dialogue to start happening.

MS. HARF: Right, no. I just don't – I quite frankly just don't know the facts here.

QUESTION: Halfway through, how would you characterize this latest round of negotiations? I mean, do you think that people are working together? Do you think that there is any progress being made? Do you think that the cease-fire will be extended?

MS. HARF: (Sniffles.)

QUESTION: Do you need a tissue?

MS. HARF: I am about to sneeze again and I'm trying not to.

QUESTION: Think of a cow.

MS. HARF: (Laughter.) I'm sorry?

QUESTION: Think of a cow and you won't sneeze.

MS. HARF: Does that work? I think I'm allergic to this today. I'm just kidding.

Look, we hope and very much want a sustainable cease-fire to be put in place, but we want an extension. So we hope that the parties will stay at the table and talk seriously. They have been. I think everyone can see the benefit of having a cease-fire in place, and beyond that, I just don't have more of a characterization for how they're going. They're still talking. The cease-fire is still in place, so --

QUESTION: Right, but one of the last times that it ended, hostilities continued or began almost immediately, and I'm just wondering if you think that we're about to do that again.

MS. HARF: I think we don't know, to be honest.

QUESTION: You just said that the U.S. is very interested in seeing an end to the tunnel threat --

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- into Israel. I thought that Israel pulled its troops out because it said it had neutralized the Hamas tunnel threat into Israeli territory. Are there more tunnels that we don't know about or is this just --

MS. HARF: Well, it's a threat we're constantly worried about and the Israelis are constantly worried about. I don't have more details for you than that.

QUESTION: Do you have any sense from the U.S. team there about Israel being interested in trying to relax some of the border restrictions for people in and out of the territory or easing a bit of the --

MS. HARF: I just don't have more details for you on any of the substance of the talks that are happening right now, including that.

In the back, yes.

QUESTION: Is there any possibility of Ambassador King going to North Korea to win the release of the American citizens?

MS. HARF: Not that I've heard of.

QUESTION: Is he coming back to DC after --

MS. HARF: It's my understanding, yes.

Yes, in the back.

QUESTION: On Turkey.

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: Can you confirm whether President Obama has spoken yet with President-elect Erdogan since Sunday? And if so, anything?

MS. HARF: I said yesterday they'd talk in the coming days. Check with the White House.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS. HARF: Okay. Well, then it just -- there you go.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MS. HARF: They're one step ahead of me. So I'm sure a readout has been put out, I'm assuming?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. HARF: Great. I'd refer you to that.

QUESTION: Thanks.

MS. HARF: Thanks, guys.

August 11, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC

QUESTION: What assurances --

MS. HARF: Sorry.

QUESTION: -- has the United States gotten from Moscow that its involvement in this new humanitarian aid operation into Ukraine is not going to be just a precursor to some more military mission?

MS. HARF: Well, it's something we're concerned about, very deeply concerned. And they -- we believe Russia's been trying to lay the international groundwork to support a humanitarian operation into Ukraine. We are concerned that Russia could try to use a humanitarian or peacekeeping operation as a pretense for inserting elements of military force into Ukraine. We do not believe that any actions, humanitarian or otherwise, should be taken in Ukraine without Kyiv's direct permission, no -- whether under the guise of humanitarian convoys or any other pretext, Russia has not right to intervene in Ukraine without Kyiv's permission. So we are concerned about it, and we're closely monitoring it.

QUESTION: And you said that Russia had been laying this groundwork. What kind of groundwork had they been laying for humanitarian aid operations?

MS. HARF: Well, they've been laying groundwork for increased intervention in Ukraine, with the large build-up of troops at the border that we've seen.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: They've deployed a sizeable military force to the Ukrainian border. This force is capable of invading Ukraine on very short notice if Russia were to elect to do so. A large portion of this force is deployed only a few kilometers from the border.

QUESTION: So it sounds like the United States is not okay with Russia participating in this. Why then do you think the EU would be okay with it?

MS. HARF: I haven't seen the EU comments on this. I think though we and the EU -- and again, I haven't seen the comments -- have been very clear that Russia should not intervene in Ukraine without Kyiv's permission.

QUESTION: But it's a joint operation, no, Russia and the EU?

MS. HARF: In terms of what? Humanitarian?

QUESTION: The humanitarian aid, yes.

MS. HARF: I haven't seen any of the specifics. I'm happy to check, but --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: They're saying -- the separatists are saying there are 1,500 dead, they have no electricity in their areas, they are running very low on supplies and so on. You are -- you don't oppose --

MS. HARF: I don't have any sympathy for the separatists --

QUESTION: Okay. But these are --

MS. HARF: -- who have taken up arms against the Ukrainians and killed innocent civilians.

QUESTION: But there are villages and towns --

MS. HARF: Well, the --

QUESTION: -- that are populated by civilians in these areas.

MS. HARF: But the way -- the way to do it -- first of all, we've been attempting to get humanitarian goods and access in, but the separatists aren't allowing it. The way for the people, the civilians in these towns, to get access to the humanitarian goods they need is for the separatists to lay down their arms, to pull back, and to de-escalate. That's how this ends here.

QUESTION: Do you have any way of confirming the figures that they say about the dead, the number of people killed?

MS. HARF: We -- I can check. That sounds pretty high to me, but I can check.

...

QUESTION: What is the United States official policy with regard to the Russian annexation of Crimea?

MS. HARF: Remains the same: illegal. Not okay. Not acceptable. Against international law. Crimea is part of Ukraine.

QUESTION: Thank you.

August 8, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC

QUESTION: -- the latest movement of Russian forces towards the Ukrainian border?

MS. HARF: I don't know if I have any update for you. Obviously, the buildup of significant numbers of Russian troops is alarming near the U.Krainian border. It's clearly meant to intimidate Ukraine. I think we can safely say nobody -- at least we don't know Russia's true intentions here. Again, we see Russia saying one thing and doing another. So obviously, this is very concerning to us.

QUESTION: So do you think that the Russians are sending the Buk missiles that -- apparently, they downed a fighter jet yesterday.

MS. HARF: I've seen those reports. I can't confirm them, but it would be holding entirely with the pattern that we've seen.

On Snowden?

QUESTION: Yeah, just on Snowden.

MS. HARF: Yeah, uh-huh.

QUESTION: I mean, so obviously you condemn -- you don't agree with Russia's decision to give him asylum. Are there any actions that the Government -- the U.S. Government is going to take to -- not punish, but to object to this and --

MS. HARF: To this latest action?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. HARF: Not that I've heard of.

QUESTION: Okay. Do you know why not?

MS. HARF: Well, I think we've been very clear about our position. We've put an enormous amount of pressure on Russia over other issues recently. I'm not sure exactly what action we would take, other than to make very clearly our strong disagreement with what they've done.

QUESTION: One more on Russia. Is -- and I don't think you were asked about this yesterday.

MS. HARF: Okay.

QUESTION: I apologize if you were. But there is a – there was a projection mocking President Obama on his birthday. Are you aware of this?

MS. HARF: I am not, no. In Russia?

QUESTION: It was a projection of an image of him, projected, I believe, onto the side of the U.S. Embassy. I'll come back to you about it.

MS. HARF: Okay.

QUESTION: But it was rather – it seemed rather derogatory, actually.

QUESTION: Just a quick --

MS. HARF: I mean, a lot – quite frankly, a lot of what we're seeing come out of Russia today is fairly derogatory.

August 5, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC

QUESTION: I'm wondering – yesterday, you said that you weren't able to verify either of these conflicting – the many numerous conflicting reports about these Ukrainian soldiers.

MS. PSAKI: I do have a little bit of new information on that.

QUESTION: Do you have – yes.

MS. PSAKI: The OSCE observer mission on the Russian border facilitated the movement of 437 Ukrainian troops into Russia on August 3rd. The troops had requested OSCE assistance in opening a humanitarian corridor after being surrounded by separatists and finding themselves without food, fuel, and ammunition. All their attempts to negotiate a cease-fire with the separatists had failed. At least 192 of these servicemen returned to Ukraine on August 4th. The OSCE was not made aware of any asylum requests.

We also would note that the Russians have committed to return the rest of the troops as well. That's the latest number that we have at this point.

QUESTION: Okay. I mean, this situation seems bizarre, no? I just – what I mean, so you have a situation where the Ukrainian army that you support is fighting separatists who you oppose but who are supported by Russia. And somehow the OSCE negotiates safe passage for these Ukrainian troops into Russia where they are not molested; they're taken care of apparently. And then they – and then some of them go back.

This would seem to me to suggest that the situation is perhaps less – recognizing that there is actual shelling and fighting going on in certain places, what does this tell you about the situation between Ukrainian troops and the Russian troops on the other side of the border? Does it tell you anything?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure I would venture to do any broad analysis here, given the other events that have continued to happen on the ground.

QUESTION: Fair enough.

MS. PSAKI: Obviously, in this case the OSCE obviously played a significant role here in assuring their safe passage, and certainly we wanted to note that the Russians have agreed to return the troops.

QUESTION: Okay. So that's a positive thing?

MS. PSAKI: This particular incident, certainly.

QUESTION: Right. Do --

MS. PSAKI: But obviously, there are a range of other issues that we remain concerned about.

QUESTION: Clearly. I think you've -- yes, you've made that very obvious. But do you think that in the absence -- if the OSCE hadn't been there, are you concerned that there might have been -- that this might have led to people dying, bloodshed?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's hard to know, Matt. But I mean, it was a situation obviously where they were surrounded by separatists and they had no food, fuel, ammunition.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: So it certainly was not a desirable --

QUESTION: Your position --

MS. PSAKI: -- situation to be sitting in.

QUESTION: Okay. So your position would be then that they -- this should never have happened in the first place because there shouldn't be a separatists attacking the army?

MS. PSAKI: Well certainly. The prime -- the, of course, primary point is that, yes.

QUESTION: All right. So the other thing that you were asked yesterday about this Russian military -- aviation military exercise that's going on.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: You said you were -- the U.S. was very deep -- was deeply concerned about it, that it's provocative. Well, the Russian defense ministry says that this is -- this exercise is not taking place really close to the Ukrainian border. It's a thousand kilometers away. And I'm wondering if given that, if you still have deep concerns about this being a provocative exercise.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, Matt, the point I was making yesterday that I think I would certainly stick with is that obviously the conditions and the circumstances that any of these exercises are taking place in are a relevant factor, and that when we're in a situation where we're trying to reach a cease-fire where the Russians say they want to reach that, these sort of exercises send a different message.

QUESTION: Right. But I mean, it's really not close to the Ukrainian border. So if you're deeply concerned -- I mean, how far away can the Russians do military exercises without drawing the

concern of the United States? I mean, do they have to be in Vladivostok? I mean, how far away from --

QUESTION: (Inaudible) the Czech Republic?

QUESTION: I mean, it --

MS. PSAKI: I don't have an exact kilometer (inaudible) measurement.

QUESTION: Siberia? Where do they -- where exactly is it that the Russians can have military exercises that won't -- that you don't think -- or that you won't have concerns are provocative to the situation in Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: If there are exercises in Siberia, I'm happy to speak to that at the time.

QUESTION: Okay. But you still have -- you have concerns about this exercise and it being a provocative action, is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Despite the distance, the rather large distance?

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: Jen, the Polish foreign minister is very concerned about these exercises and says that Russia is preparing to invade Ukraine, and that has generated a lot of news. The markets are way down today. Do you have any comment on that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think there have been a range of reports and comments out there. I think it's -- there are a few things that we do know. Additional Russian forces continue to arrive along the Ukrainian border, and Russia continues to reposition forces throughout the region. We don't have specific numbers from here to share, and specifics on troop numbers is difficult to calculate. So I'm not going to make a prediction from here, but certainly the fact that troops continue to arrive is something that we are watching closely and remain concerned about.

QUESTION: And a few hours ago, President Putin said that he was going to develop a response to the sanctions put on his country by the United States and the EU, and that's also held -- the stock market is down 1 percent as we speak. I thought these sanctions were supposed to hurt Russia, not the United States.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, one, Lucas, I think the vast, vast, vast majority of the hurt is being felt by Russia. As you noted -- or I don't think -- but related to it is the central bank's statement in Russia that was made as well. I mean, our goal here remains continuing to impose costs to increase the -- to impose sanctions to increase the costs and -- on Russia and on -- and to have an

impact on Russia's actions. And obviously, with everything from the amount of nearly \$100 billion in capital is expected to leave Russia, the impact on the energy, financial, and defense sectors, they're all feeling pain. And that's, of course, what we are hopeful will have an impact.

QUESTION: But you say you want to affect Putin's actions, but you just said that Russia is putting more forces along the border. So how are the sanctions making him change his calculus?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think with every week that passes, we're seeing more of a dire impact on the Russian economy. And obviously, President Putin has a choice to make. Does he care about the economy and the middle class people and people living in Russia, or does he care about continuing to take aggressive actions as it relates to Ukraine?

QUESTION: Can I just follow up on one thing?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: In Lucas's question he referred to the exercise causing the Polish concern, but you're talking about -- when you say troops, Russian troops moving towards the border, that is something entirely separate from these military --

MS. PSAKI: Separate.

QUESTION: -- from the aviation exercise, correct?

MS. PSAKI: That is entirely separate, yes.

...

QUESTION: Excuse me if I missed this, but were you asked about the Russian media report saying that Russia is considering barring European airlines from flying over its territory, from flying over Siberia, I think, to go to the Far East?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think if Russia doesn't like the sanctions that have been imposed and the impact they've had, then the more productive response would be for Russia to stop sending arms and fighters into Ukraine. And that, we feel, is the more appropriate response they could take.

QUESTION: But does it bother you that they seem to be considering retaliation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think -- sure, but I think our view is that if they want to bring an end to the sanctions, there are clear steps they can take, clear -- a clear path they can take.

QUESTION: Well, but Jen, I mean, are you -- you're approaching this with the idea that they want an end to the sanctions. Are you convinced that they do? They certainly don't have -- they certainly haven't been acting that way, have they?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, I think, again, because the pain has been building and we've seen the impact on the economy only growing over the course of the last several weeks, we think there are serious decisions that President Putin will need to make.

QUESTION: As far as these sanctions are concerned if U.S. is asking any other countries not to do business with Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, Goyal, you've probably seen a range of sanctions that have been put in place by not just the EU, but the Japanese recently put in place some sanctions. So there has been a strong response from the international community.

August 4, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: A couple of briefings ago, Marie said that you guys continue to see weapons shipments from Russia into Ukraine. I'm wondering what, if any, detail you can give us on what you're seeing, where you're seeing it going, when you saw it go.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: I will see, Nicole, if there's any other details we had beyond what we have – we do continue, of course, to see evidence that Russia is supplying the separatists with arms, materiel, and training. I think Marie noted evidence last week that the Russians intend to deliver heavier, more powerful multiple rocket launchers to the separatist forces in Ukraine. Since the shootdown of the MH17, multiple rocket launcher activity at – there has been multiple rocket launcher activity – sorry – at a Russian site in southwest Russia. That has continued, and multiple rocket launchers continue to depart and return to this site at irregular intervals. Further, we think that Russia may be preparing to transfer heavier multiple rocket launchers to the separatists. Those are the recent updates that we've really had in terms of our concerns about the transfer and supply of weapons and movement on the ground.

QUESTION: Are you saying that that's new today, or that's what she said – that sounds remarkably similar to --

MS. PSAKI: That's – I'm not sure if she outlined all of that last week. I'd have to check back. That's the latest I have. I'm not aware of new information. It's something we're still seeing ongoing on the ground.

QUESTION: Okay. And when you say "lots of activity" in this southwestern area of Russia, what do you mean?

MS. PSAKI: Well --

QUESTION: Would you – is it being moved across the border, or is it being moved – like what, if you can say what --

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've expressed concern about that in the past. Obviously, providing --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: -- supplies to the separatists would, in most likelihood, require that in some capacity.

QUESTION: Right. I'm just trying to understand the language.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: You're concerned. You've seen lots of activity. I'm just trying to get more exact language about what that activity is.

MS. PSAKI: Well, there have obviously been reports of troops gathering. There have been reports of movement of supplies and individuals and materials across the border. So it's all of those.

QUESTION: It looks like today the biggest movement of supplies and troops across the border was actually from Ukraine into Russia. Do you have -- what do you make of that?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not actually sure which piece you're referring to, Matt.

QUESTION: Well, several hundred Ukrainian soldiers crossed the Russian border today, according to numerous reports and officials. And I'm just wondering what you think.

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's --

QUESTION: Presumably you would have asked the Ukrainians --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- what's going on with their troops.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: I mean, I don't think that they were invading Russia. But --

MS. PSAKI: I think that's fair to assume.

QUESTION: But what were they -- what's going on? I mean, this is just bizarre.

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are conflicting reports, and we really don't have verification one way or the other. The Russians claim they deserted. The Ukrainians claim they were forced across the border due to heavy fighting and are being held by Russia. We're unable, at this point, to confirm either of those accounts.

QUESTION: All right. Well, when you say you don't have verification, can I ask you what the verification is for the other troop movements that you just -- or the movements of the multiple rocket launchers and -- around the base, the Russian military facilities in the southwest?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have a range of information that we have available. I don't think I'm going to detail it further.

QUESTION: But you're not prepared – but – so you're not, at least at this point, prepared to make that public? You don't have – I mean --

MS. PSAKI: We have been making information public --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: -- as we can. If we can make more information public, we will certainly venture to do so.

QUESTION: Could you – yeah, well could you try to get this latest? Because the last time that you put out the – so which was, what, a Sunday, two Sundays ago, right?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I mean, it was immediately – people went over it with a fine-toothed comb. I think some – I don't know how – what their expertise was in looking at the satellite images, but they were less than compelling to some people. And frankly, the calls for more evidence, particularly on the plane, the downing of the plane, have been coming from a lot of different corners. So we eagerly await more.

MS. PSAKI: Duly noted.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: On this --

QUESTION: What about reports that the Russians may be conducting a vast military exercise along the border with Ukraine, including about 100 different fighter jets, Sus and MiGs?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we are deeply concerned by Russia's plan to conduct a large military aviation exercise this week in areas bordering Ukraine. Exercises of this kind are provocative and only serve to escalate tensions. Russia has repeatedly called for a peaceful solution to the situation in Ukraine and must match its words with deeds by ceasing the flow of weapons, fighters, and money into Ukraine, and by moving its military forces away from the Ukrainian border.

QUESTION: And what more can you say about the impact on sanctions? Apparently, one of the Russian budget airlines today suspended all operations because it's afraid that it won't be able to either enter markets that are now honoring the EU/U.S. sanctions.

MS. PSAKI: Well, our view, as you know, is that the sanctions – the United States sanctions, the sanctions from the EU – have had a range of impacts on the Russian economy, whether it's capital flow or an impact on the market. And certainly, we're seeing that continue. I can check, Roz. I know we regularly update on this sort of data. We can see if we can get some more for you and I'll have ready for tomorrow as well.

QUESTION: But it doesn't seem as if it's changing the decisions within the Kremlin on how to engage politically or militarily regarding Ukraine. Is this a long-term exercise that the U.S. and the EU are engaged in?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've seen impacts already, significant impacts on the economy. Whether or not President Putin decides that the economy and the well-being of the economy of his country matters is a decision for him to make.

QUESTION: Jen --

MS. PSAKI: But certainly we're seeing an impact of the steps we've taken.

QUESTION: -- did you happen to see the President's interview in The Economist, where he called – Russia doesn't make anything, he basically reduced it to a third-world country that cannot deal with the economic situation, he doesn't see people running in droves immigrating to Russia and so on? What do you make of that? Does that indicate that relations between Russia and the U.S. really are at their lowest point?

MS. PSAKI: I think it indicates – I don't know if you want to list out the natural resources that Russia has that they're --

QUESTION: Well, I mean, the question is --

MS. PSAKI: -- they used to export, Said. But I think there are issues --

QUESTION: Because the question was the --

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish. There are issues that we continue to work with Russia on, including the P5+1 negotiations and an effort to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. There are issues where we have disagreements. We also make clear where we feel there are challenges that they have in their economy of – many caused by our sanctions, but it's important to remember that these are having an impact and the decisions by President Putin are having an impact on his own people.

QUESTION: Is a deteriorating Russian economy a cause for celebration or concern for the United States?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, I think our preference is to see an end to the conflict in Ukraine. We think President Putin has the ability to bring an end to these challenges that are being posed to the economy by the sanctions regime process.

QUESTION: Specifically on this Russian military exercise which you've said is provocative, is that -- and only serves to exacerbate tension --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- is that because of the conflict that's going on in the east?

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: So in a normal time when there wasn't this, you wouldn't have any problem with the Russians doing an exercise like this; is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: I think we'd have far less concern, Matt. And they have had exercises in the past, but obviously, the context and the situation on the ground is, of course, relevant information.

QUESTION: Okay. But you might call it a conflict, but it's certainly not a war per se, right?

MS. PSAKI: That's why I called it a conflict.

QUESTION: Right, exactly. But there -- I just, I don't know -- the consistency is odd because when the North Koreans complain about you guys and the South Koreans doing military exercises -- and there still is, although it's not a state of war, but the war, the Korean conflict, never ended. There is actually a war and North Korea has nukes, and you dismiss and brush aside their concerns when you do these military exercises with the South Koreans in the midst of this state of limbo where the conflict still exists. So I guess I just don't understand why it is that you think that the Russians shouldn't be able -- shouldn't do a military exercise on their own land --

MS. PSAKI: Because our focus here and a focus that they have stated publicly they support is to de-escalate the situation on the ground. And obviously, actions speak to that.

QUESTION: Okay. So you think that this is intentionally provocative trying to further destabilize the situation in Ukraine; is that correct -- this exercise? Is that the reason?

MS. PSAKI: Well, whether it's intentionally or unintentionally, it certainly has an impact on the perception on the ground.

July 31, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC

QUESTION: So it looks as though – well, not doesn't look as though; it is the case that the – at least some investigators made it to --

MS. HARF: Correct.

QUESTION: -- the crash site this morning. I'm wondering if you have anything to say about that, and are there – do you have any people there?

MS. HARF: So we are pleased that OSCE monitors with Dutch and Australian investigators were able to finally gain access to the crash site today. They had some difficulties getting there, but they did gain access. I don't think we have anyone there.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: I'm happy to check.

QUESTION: Does that mean that you believe the Poroshenko/separatist – or that the cease-fire, whatever – however you want to describe it, that – around the crash site is working?

MS. HARF: Well, we have welcomed his announcement of a unilateral cease-fire. We have called on the Russian-backed separatists to honor it. We've seen there's still some fighting in the area. We saw today that a group of separatists were trying to prevent access, fired on the Ukrainian security forces who were escorting the convoys. So it's still a challenging security environment.

QUESTION: So you're not yet in – you're not yet satisfied with the situation as it exists in terms of security at the crash site?

MS. HARF: There's – more needs to be done.

QUESTION: Okay. And there were some reports yesterday about land mines being close to – you have anything about that?

MS. HARF: Yeah. We couldn't confirm – we could not and still cannot confirm those reports.

QUESTION: All right.

MS. HARF: I saw those as well.

QUESTION: Now, for the last couple days, you've been asked about the Ukrainian military's counterterrorism operation or operations that are going after the separatists in areas of south and east Ukraine, and you've been asked about civilian casualties. Yesterday, you said yes, you were -- are concerned about civilian casualties in all these cases, but you're not sure who -- if they're firing these --

MS. HARF: Right, we aren't --

QUESTION: -- this artillery or not. Is that --

MS. HARF: We don't have granularity on all the details.

QUESTION: Still not? So you do on Gaza, you're pretty sure you know what's going on in Gaza because of the UN and because of the Israeli statements, but --

MS. HARF: We've continued to gather information.

QUESTION: -- presented with accounts from the civilians in the southeast of Ukraine where you've seen --

MS. HARF: We're working to verify them, Matt.

QUESTION: So you can't yet verify that there have been a -- what you would consider to be an unacceptably high level of civilian casualties?

MS. HARF: Correct. We cannot confirm that.

QUESTION: But you -- just to make sure --

MS. HARF: Because in many of the --

QUESTION: Well, hold on. Hold on.

MS. HARF: Well, no, wait. No, let me tell you why we can't, though, because that's important. Because many of these are reported to be happening in a Russian separatist-controlled area, which we just have much less visibility into often.

QUESTION: Okay, but, I mean, that doesn't necessarily mean that they're not happening.

MS. HARF: But we can't confirm them either. So before we confirm them, we've seen the reports, and --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: -- if true, they would be concerning, but no.

QUESTION: Okay, but unless I'm mistaken, you haven't absolutely confirmed that it was Israeli shells that hit the UN school.

MS. HARF: Which is why I said what I said today in the way I said it.

QUESTION: Exactly, but – okay, but anyway, it is still a concern civilian casualties on both sides of the Ukraine conflict, as it is elsewhere?

MS. HARF: Civilian casualties are always a concern, but the Ukrainian Government has shown remarkable restraint here I would note.

QUESTION: Okay. And are you yet willing – well, that's a bad way to put it. Have you seen any sign yet that the sanctions that were imposed going back all the way as far as the annexation of Crimea, but up to and including the sanctions that were just announced the other day --

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: -- that -- have you seen any sign that those have had an impact on President Putin or the Russian Government's decision making as it relates to Ukraine, as it relates to support for the -- what your -- the support for the separatists in terms of what you say is the movement of heavy weapons and artillery shelling?

MS. HARF: We continue to see the Russians supporting the separatists.

QUESTION: So in other words, the sanctions have not had an impact?

MS. HARF: Well, this isn't a yes or no proposition here.

QUESTION: It's not?

MS. HARF: There's a long-term, strategic calculus that President Putin undoubtedly is making right now, and I can't predict whether or not in his head at this moment it is having an impact.

QUESTION: But not yet? You haven't seen in --

MS. HARF: We haven't seen the situation on the ground change. Okay?

QUESTION: Because of the sanctions or because of anything else?

MS. HARF: Because of anything.

QUESTION: All right.

MS. HARF: I mean if President Putin is willing to drive his economy into the ground, make that decision, but that's a pretty bold decision to be making for the people of Russia.

QUESTION: Do you have any new evidence of the shelling that you say is coming from the Russian side and the shipments of weaponry to the separatists?

MS. HART: We did – let's see. As of July 26th, which is a few days ago now, we had seen two additional battalion tactical groups in the Rostov area, which is 50 kilometers from the Ukrainian border. That has brought the total number of Russian battalion tactical groups deployed near the border to at least 16. That's something we've been watching very --

QUESTION: But that's in Russia.

MS. HART: Correct.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HART: But they're deployed near the border. I'm just noting some of the things we've seen lately.

QUESTION: Oh, okay.

MS. HART: We continue to see shipments.

QUESTION: You continue to see shipments across the border and the shelling too?

MS. HART: I can check on the shelling.

July 30, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC

QUESTION: You expressed concern – more than concern, you condemned the shelling of the UNRWA school in Gaza. I'm wondering if you're willing to condemn civilian casualties in Ukraine committed by both the separatists and the Ukrainian military.

MS. HARF: Well, we could condemn civilian casualties wherever they take place. But obviously, we have to look at every individual incident.

QUESTION: Have you now – yesterday, when Jen was asked about this, she said that there were reports, but you couldn't confirm them, of the Ukrainian military using artillery and heavy – in Donetsk in heavily-populated --

QUESTION: Short-range missiles.

QUESTION: So, yeah.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm. So on that, the Ukrainians have a responsibility to protect their citizens in their own country. The weapons cited in these reports are a standard artillery component in former Soviet militaries. We're certainly not going to tell the Ukrainians they can't use standard weaponry, particularly when they're coming under such fire, but as with the use of all weapon systems in this conflict, it is imperative that the Ukrainians continue to exercise as much care as possible to protect innocent lives, and of course, the reason there is all of this instability is because of Russia's actions here.

QUESTION: Are you concerned at all that, as you have said with Israel, that they are not living up to their own high standards? Are you – do you have the same concerns in Ukraine, that the Ukrainian military is not doing enough to prevent civilian casualties?

MS. HARF: Well, look, we are going to also hold them to their commitments on – particularly with – when we talk about exclusion zones, right, when we've talked about ceasefires, but also in protecting civilian casualties, we've seen them exercise extraordinary restraint in the face of incredible opposition from the Russians, and we'll continue working with them.

QUESTION: Okay, when you say the Ukrainians have a responsibility to protect their citizens in their own country, does that apply to all Ukrainians, all people in Ukrainian soil?

MS. HARF: What – I don't understand the crux of your question.

QUESTION: Well, it just seems to me that if they're firing artillery or, what – or these rockets or missiles into civilian apartment buildings, including one that's holding – housing an old folks

home, basically, that those people who are getting hit and killed and wounded are – the Ukrainian Government also has the responsibility to protect them as well, correct?

MS. HARF: That's correct. I can't confirm reports about what this artillery hit. There are, again, a variety of reports out there. We're still trying to get a little more clarity on that.

QUESTION: Okay. And then on the sanctions that were imposed --

MS. HARF: Yes. We announced more sanctions yesterday.

QUESTION: Correct. I know that it is probably too early to tell if these are going to be the tipping point, if this is what's finally going to get the Russians to change their calculus, but I'm wondering, given the fact that this morning the Russian official – the Russian Government's response has been very dismissive, to say the least, if you have any realistic expectation that this going – that these – that this latest round is actually going to do what you say you want it to do.

MS. HARF: Well, I mean, the point here is to continue upping the pressure and increasingly squeezing them economically so that President Putin will make the right decision here. But if he doesn't, we will continue putting the pressure him. I mean, look, the fact that even before yesterday, nearly \$100 billion in capital was expected to flee Russia, at some point I think the Russian citizens are going to be pretty unhappy that because of his actions in the region and other countries, their economy is tanking. So that's what it's designed to do and we'll keep upping the pressure. These are key sectors yesterday – the firms in these sectors really want access to the U.S., really want access to the EU, and are going to feel the pressure.

QUESTION: So you – so that means the intent of these sanctions is to, using your words, tank the Russian economy?

MS. HARF: The purpose of these sanctions is to put enough pressure on the Russian Government that eventually President Putin will change his calculation.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: But if he doesn't, he is going to face a situation where the people of his country who've worked so hard to be part of the international community won't be.

QUESTION: Because --

MS. HARF: And he can face those consequences.

QUESTION: Because you – because your sanctions have affected them?

MS. HARF: Have very negatively affected the Russian economy, which will affect them.

QUESTION: So in fact, you're saying that the goal here is to make it painful on the Russian people?

MS. HARF: Not at all.

QUESTION: Oh, okay.

MS. HARF: That is not what I said, Matt.

QUESTION: All right, well it seems like that's what you're saying.

MS. HARF: The goal – I will repeat it for you yet again --

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. HARF: -- is to put enough pressure on the Russian Government that they change their calculation and do different things in the future.

QUESTION: Has the --

MS. HARF: Part of how that happens is the people of Russia say, look, I don't want to not have access to the international financial system because President Putin is off trying to invade other countries. That's part of what can affect a leader's calculation, which I know you're very well aware of.

QUESTION: Yeah – excuse me – yes, I am. But is the goal right now then to drive the Russian economy into recession?

MS. HARF: No.

QUESTION: Because a lot of people say that that's what --

MS. HARF: The goal is to pressure the Russian Government to change their behavior.

QUESTION: Have you come to the conclusion that getting to that point would – will require putting – driving the Russian economy into recession?

MS. HARF: No. That's too simplistic. What we've always said is the longer sanctions are in place, the more impact they have, and we want that to change their calculations.

QUESTION: The President yesterday was asked if this is a new cold war. He said, no, this is a very specific set of circumstances. But whether or not it is or isn't a cold war or a new cold war, it certainly looks like an economic war. Whether "war" is the right term or not, you are trying to negatively affect the Russian economy to put pressure on the government. How is that not an economic war? How is that not a new East-West, since the Russians are – I mean, since the Europeans are onboard with you too, how is that not a new East-West --

MS. HARF: Well, we put sanctions on a number of countries.

QUESTION: -- conflict?

MS. HARF: This is a tool we use all across the globe.

QUESTION: I understand that, but this is --

MS. HARF: It's not specific --

QUESTION: -- intentionally --

MS. HARF: This isn't an east-west issue.

QUESTION: Okay, well, you know you put sanctions on the Venezuelans. You just announced that this morning.

MS. HARF: Those aren't sanctions technically.

QUESTION: Well, they're travel bans. They're punishments.

MS. HARF: But technically they're not sanctions.

QUESTION: Those do not affect -- fair enough.

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: Whatever, but they are steps. They are measures that you take to show your displeasure. That's what you're doing with these sanctions as well. The travel bans and visa bans on people do not impact entire economies; they impact targeted -- specific, targeted individuals. Your -- the sanctions that you guys and the Europeans have put in place are intended to affect a broad swath of Russia's economy.

MS. HARF: Right. But it's not about east-west. We've also done that in Iran. We've done it in North Korea. We've done it elsewhere. It doesn't have anything to do with east-west or some weird Cold War --

QUESTION: So you're at war with --

MS. HARF: -- throwback that President Putin wants to somehow, like, return to.

QUESTION: Okay, so you're not just in a -- you're not just at war with -- an economic war with Russia; you're also in an economic war with Iran, with North Korea, with all these countries --

MS. HARF: No. We believe that sanctions are an incredibly effective and important tool to -- that can impel countries to change their behavior.

QUESTION: But you would also admit that thus far your sanctions have not changed the Russians' behavior, correct?

MS. HARF: Well, that's -- and I've also said last week that we don't know what they would have done if we hadn't. So --

QUESTION: Yeah, but I mean just to kind of broaden it out, I mean you saw that the -- I'm sorry if you missed it and I was just checked out for a minute, but did you see the tweet of the --

MS. HARF: Maybe that happened to me, too.

QUESTION: -- member of parliament that said that President Obama is sparking a new -- is going to be the president that goes down in history as starting a new cold war?

MS. HARF: We're not the country that invaded another country.

QUESTION: Right, but I mean if you --

MS. HARF: I mean our actions are in response to actions --

QUESTION: I understand, but --

MS. HARF: -- the Russian Government took.

QUESTION: -- if you're taking it on the totality, okay, you have these sanctions, you have these other measures that you've kicked Russia out of the G-8 for now, you've stopped a lot -- most of the political cooperation at NATO, you --

MS. HARF: Well --

QUESTION: Let me finish. You put this violation that -- you slapped them with a violation for their arms treaty. I mean, you can see from the Russian point of view that you are interested in kind of fueling a renewal of the Cold War where it's like --

MS. HARF: Not at all.

QUESTION: -- the world against Russia.

MS. HARF: No, not at all. And look, first, it's not just about us; it's about the EU, it's about the rest of the world standing up and saying --

QUESTION: I mean not just you, but that there is a new cold war in effect.

MS. HARF: Well, no, because the -- this is a very limited set of circumstances, not a broad, ideological, decades-long conflict that we saw during the Cold War. This is in response to specific Russian Government actions that -- by invading another country. It is about --

QUESTION: But you don't think it's a broad – it may be not a decades-long ideological war, but it does seem to be an ideological war over how Russia views its role in the world and how --

MS. HARF: Whether you can invade other countries?

QUESTION: Well, no, just about Russia's role in that region versus how you view it.

MS. HARF: Well, look, what we have said is everything we've done – if Russia hadn't invaded Ukraine, none of this would be happening. So I think that's the only proof point you need here. President Obama very clearly said yesterday this actually isn't what we wanted. This is not the kind of relationship we wanted, but we're also not going to stand by and let Russia do this and get away with it.

QUESTION: Just a quick follow-up, madam, thank you.

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: As far as these sanctions are concerned, if the countries doing business with Russia, like India – they have a business relations and commercial relations and all that, is going to affect?

MS. HARF: I can check on that. Obviously, these are unilateral sanctions we put in place for the U.S. I can check on other impacts they may have.

July 29, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: On Ukraine, yes. Do you have any details about the sanctions the Secretary was mentioning this morning? And apparently, according to the White House, the U.S. is ready to take these sanctions as soon as today.

MS. PSAKI: That's right. I don't have any details for you at this point. As the Secretary mentioned this morning, we're preparing and coordinating with the EU. We certainly welcome Europe's determination to take strong new steps and the strong – this transatlantic community, and G-7, are united in their determination to respond to continued and intensified Russian aggression. And we expect a statement from the EU on sanctions against Russia shortly, and I expect you'll hear more from us on ours shortly as well.

QUESTION: We have some reporting that the U.S. has information that Ukrainian military has been firing short-range missiles at rebel strongholds in eastern Ukraine. And I'm wondering, given that you're calling for a de-escalation, if you're concerned that the Russians will use this as a pretext for greater either involvement in Ukraine or possibly an invasion or something like that. Like it does seem as if this is – Russians' actions notwithstanding, this does seem to be the most powerful weapon used in the conflict so far, and I'm just wondering if this is a provocation that Russia may seize upon.

MS. PSAKI: Well, you may have seen this morning that the Ukrainian foreign minister was asked about this at the press conference and spoke to it there, so I would certainly point you to that.

QUESTION: Well, he didn't really answer the question, but okay.

MS. PSAKI: Well, obviously, there's nothing I can add to or communicate on this particular point from the podium. Obviously, any escalation we'd be concerned about, but beyond that, I don't have much more to add.

QUESTION: Can I just – I just want to follow up from my colleague said was – so after the EU comes out with a formal statement, you're going to have also reciprocal --

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've said we've been preparing sanctions. I expect you'll hear more from us soon. I don't have anything on the timing of their formal statement.

QUESTION: Sorry, could --

QUESTION: And then something also the Secretary said during his news conference today: He said that he had spoken to Lavrov and agreed there is a way forward to put – agreed there is a way forward and to put very specific proposals – I think he said forward -- I don't have the full quote here. What did he mean by that? Are they talking – it seemed that a readout from Lavrov's side was that they did discuss some sort of cease-fire around the crash site. Or was he speaking about something more formal on increased dialogue with Moscow?

MS. PSAKI: Well, one, there's been an ongoing dialogue with Moscow, right, that has been taking place through the EU and through --

QUESTION: Politically, yeah.

MS. PSAKI: -- Ukraine and through other partners, and we certainly support that. We also support a cease-fire, as the Secretary said this morning and as the foreign minister said this morning. But the challenge is it can't be a unilateral cease-fire, and that would require the Russians exerting additional pressure on the separatists so that they abide by it on their end.

So there are a couple of issues at play here. There is the future of de-escalating the situation in Ukraine, there's also access to the crash site. There haven't been – and you may have all seen this, but for the third day in a row the OSCE reported that the team, along with international police and aviation experts, were unable to gain access. So obviously, that continues to be a challenge. There are still ongoing discussions with the Australians and the Dutch and others about sending a police force to provide additional security, but there are a number of issues that certainly related to de-escalation and a cease-fire – or I should say that a de-escalation and a cease-fire would help address, including access to the crash site, but also including the overarching issues we have with Ukraine.

QUESTION: Jen, beyond any concern you might have that Russia might use the Ukrainian military's artillery strikes as a provocation, do you have any concern at all about the damage that these strikes are doing? I mean, they hit a home for the elderly today, apparently. Do you share, as you do with Israel and Gaza – do you think that the Ukrainians need to do more to prevent civilian casualties?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't have any confirmation, Matt, of the root of the – the source of the – these rockets, so I can't speak to it from that angle.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Of course, we support de-escalation. But for the most part, the vast majority of escalation has been from the Russian side --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: -- and the Russian separatists.

QUESTION: Right. But I'm just wondering if you think that the Ukrainian military has an obligation to try to minimize civilian casualties, as you do with the Israelis.

MS. PSAKI: Yes we do, and they have throughout the course of the last several months.

QUESTION: They have? You're – okay. I mean, there – I think there's a lot of people out there that would say that they haven't and that there's been indiscriminate firing, or at least civilian targets are being hit. You're – that's not a concern of yours at the moment; is that what you're saying?

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly, any civilian casualties are a concern, but what we have seen is that the Ukrainians have taken every step to minimize civilian casualties.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: You think they're exercising restraint?

MS. PSAKI: We do, and we have for the last several months throughout the course of this conflict.

QUESTION: And when you spoke about this ongoing dialogue with Moscow – I mean, this phone call with Secretary – with Foreign Minister Lavrov this morning doesn't sound like it was a particularly happy phone call.

MS. PSAKI: I didn't mean necessarily the United States. I meant that there has been an ongoing dialogue with the Europeans, with other parties who have a stake in the outcome.

QUESTION: And the result of that dialogue has been nothing, right? I mean, you haven't gotten anything you want. So I'm just wondering, what is the value of a dialogue that – it consists of one side accusing the other side of doing something, the other side saying – denying it, and then the first side saying, "Well, we don't believe your denial," which is exactly what happened in the conversation that Kerry had with Lavrov on Sunday or Saturday?

MS. PSAKI: The purpose of both phone calls was not primarily on this issue. Of course, it was discussed, but that's not the only step we're taking. In addition to sanctions, we've also provided a range of assistance that's continued to increase to the Ukrainians. But certainly, we continue to feel that dialogue and diplomacy should be the first step.

July 28, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine

Washington, DC

QUESTION: So let's first of all start talking about the satellite images that were released on Sunday. Do we know where they came from, the veracity of them? Let's start with those.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, we wouldn't have put them out publicly if we didn't feel confident about the accuracy. Obviously, we declassify information as we can to make it available to all of you and to the American public and the international community, and that was the case here.

QUESTION: Well, do we know which satellites these images came from? Who's – who owned them, for instance?

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to be able to get into any greater level of detail.

QUESTION: All right. Let's talk about the timing of them being released. Why did we choose over the weekend, first of all?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think everybody works on the weekend. I think all of us do, and we felt it was important to put this information out publicly. It shows engagement by the separatists and with support from – with – of Russian artillery in this effort. As you know, we've been concerned about that engagement and that escalation, and this provides a further example of that.

QUESTION: And the means that they were released – as I understand it, the first time that we saw them was released on the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine's Twitter account. Is that accurate?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we sent them out publicly for everyone to see from the State Department, so I think I – we sent them pretty broadly.

QUESTION: So what is it that the State Department is hoping to achieve from these? What kind of response, first of all, does the State Department have given the evidence that these satellite images are showing?

MS. PSAKI: Response to what specifically? Response to the satellite images, response to escalation?

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: As you know, we've been long concerned about the fact that the Russians have been supplying, supporting, arming the separatists. We – as we have information that shows and backs up those concerns, we make that information available. We have put in place, as you know, a range of sanctions, including an additional set of sanctions last week. We fully expect

the Europeans will do additional sanctions soon. And this shows the world what those concerns are and why it's important to focus on the engagement of Russia in Ukraine.

QUESTION: So Secretary Kerry spoke with Foreign Minister Lavrov over the weekend. To what detail was this – were these satellite images discussed, and how will these satellite images affect U.S.-Russia relations moving forward?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's not about the satellite images. The satellite images provide evidence of what we've been saying publicly for some time now. They didn't discuss the satellite images. They did discuss Secretary Kerry's concern about the Russians' continuing assistance and support for the separatists. And the Secretary certainly made clear he doesn't buy the claim that they are not involved and they're not engaged in this effort. So that was a part of the discussion. They also discussed the Secretary's trip over the past week and the situation on the ground in Gaza.

QUESTION: Jen, what exactly in those images was declassified?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to look at the specific images, Matt. There was some information that we have from our own sources that we put out publicly for the first time.

QUESTION: But the satellites – they were Digital Globe, right? This is not U.S. spy satellites taking – they were credited to Digital Globe, which is a commercial satellite company. So those pictures in themselves weren't subject to classification, were they?

MS. PSAKI: I'd have to look back and see what information was newly available from those satellite photos.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Obviously, you all have the packet of them.

QUESTION: Right. No, I'm just wondering what in there was declassified? What prior to Sunday – what information in that – in those four pages was classified prior to Sunday when they were released?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, one --

QUESTION: The analysis?

MS. PSAKI: -- there weren't images released previously that I'm aware of that showed that Russian forces had fired across the border at Ukrainian military forces, and that Russian – there was some, of course, that Russian-back separatists have used heavy artillery. But this was, again, further evidence and further information that we made available to – in order to show what we have concerns about. That's why we put it out publicly.

QUESTION: Right, okay. And – so that, and I – I think everyone appreciates the fact that you’re going to efforts to put out the – to put out evidence that you say backs up the claim. But does, in fact – do, in fact, those images show Russian artillery being fired into Ukraine from inside Russia? Does it?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the images showed --

QUESTION: I mean, clearly you’re not going to have video, real-time video or whatever – or maybe you do, I don’t know – but that doesn’t show – it doesn’t show that. It shows pockmarks on the ground, and then it’s got arrows drawn in, which could – so, I mean, maybe you could have an analyst or someone come and explain exactly what this is. But, I mean, to – I’m certainly not an intelligence analyst or expert in reading what these satellite photos mean. But to the casual observer, if you just showed them the pictures without the arrows drawn on them and without the text – I mean, it just looks like there’s a bunch of holes in the ground.

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, I think the images showed things such as ground scarring at a multiple rocket launch site on the Russian side of the border oriented in the direction of Ukrainian military units within Ukraine. It showed self-propelled artillery only found in Russian military units on the Russian side of the border oriented in the direction of the Ukrainian military unit. It showed a range of specifics that I think you can lead – lead you to a conclusion.

QUESTION: Okay. You’ve seen the Russian Defense Ministry came out this morning and said that basically – I mean, I guess not surprisingly, said that these are fake; they don’t show what you purport that they do show. Do you have any response to that?

MS. PSAKI: I think that strains credibility, that claim.

QUESTION: Their claim that it’s fake?

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Okay. And so --

QUESTION: Why?

QUESTION: Do --

QUESTION: I mean --

MS. PSAKI: They’re photos that show clear evidence of what we just outlined, that back up what we’ve been seeing patterns of for some time. This is not the only evidence we have of Russian engagement and their support for the separatists. There’s a preponderance of evidence out there. This is just the recent images that we made available that back up and support the claims, the public comments, the information we’ve been putting out for several months now.

QUESTION: But as Matt said – I mean, I saw those images on Sunday morning and sent them to the desk saying I have no idea what these show.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm --

QUESTION: Because despite the fact that there are arrows drawn on it, it does just look like a bunch of holes in the ground.

MS. PSAKI: Well, it was meant to provide visuals. I'm sure we can get you both --

QUESTION: (Inaudible) visuals of anything.

MS. PSAKI: I'm sure we can get you both a briefing with the proper officials from DNI if that's helpful.

QUESTION: That would be great. So do you know – is the process of declassifying still going on?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely.

QUESTION: So we can expect to see more evidence?

MS. PSAKI: Should we have more to share, we certainly will.

QUESTION: All right. What do you have to say, if anything, about the latest round of fighting today, which has prevented yet again these international police delegation from getting in to secure the crash site?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's in everyone's interest, I should say – not just everyone's – the United States, the international community's interests in seeing access to this crash site. And we support the efforts of the Malaysians, the Dutch, the Australians, and others who have offered their support to secure the site. With each day that passes, that is concerning and disappointing to us that the investigators don't have access to the site. So we certainly call on all sides to facilitate proper security of the site and to immediately ensure access. This is something we've been engaged closely with the Ukrainians on as well.

QUESTION: The reports that I've – some of the reports that I've seen indicate – and these are reports coming – and the Ukrainians say this as well, that the reason that there is this fighting is because they resumed their operation in and around the zone that includes the crash site. So I'm just wondering, given the fact that you think that access to it is important, is it wise for the Ukrainian army to be resuming – or to be conducting because they resumed their operation in and around these operations in a way – in such a way that causes fighting that prevents the very people that you want to get there from getting there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, first the root cause of this is the Russian separatists, not the Ukrainians. The Ukrainians are defending their own country. The Russian separatists didn't abide by the ceasefire

that was in the area around the crash site and continued to fire on the Ukrainian forces. So they can't stand by while that happens. If they – if all parties, including the Russians, want to see investigators reach the crash site and support a ceasefire, as was stated in the readout that Foreign Minister Lavrov's team put out yesterday, then they can call on the separatists to step down, and I am certain that the Ukrainians would as well.

QUESTION: So you do not – President Putin the other day said that he was willing to use whatever influence he had with them to stop it. You don't believe that that's happened? I'm just – you don't think that that's happened, and you're – and evidence of that is that the separatists are to blame for the fighting today and yesterday that has prevented the police from getting in. Is that your mind?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've seen over the last few months, Matt, that the Russians are masters of saying one thing and doing another, and this is certainly an example of that.

QUESTION: Masters of saying one thing and doing another. Say grand masters. You don't want to say that? It would be a great quote. (Laughter.) I want to know, next, the Secretary's call with Foreign Minister Lavrov yesterday was pretty harsh. He basically called him a liar, or the readout did. What does it mean? Did Foreign Minister Lavrov tell him, "Look, we really have nothing to do with this," and the Secretary said, "Sergey, I don't believe you"? Is that pretty accurate?

MS. PSAKI: I think the Secretary made clear we have a great deal of evidence showing their engagement and their involvement.

QUESTION: Okay, well, do you expect – given the apparent tone of that call, would you expect there to be more calls?

MS. PSAKI: I would.

QUESTION: In the near future?

MS. PSAKI: I would.

QUESTION: All right. And then last thing from me: Tony Blinken --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- at the White House said what you just said about the Europeans and enacting sanctions. Can you give – and the U.S. will follow suit. Can you give us any indication of – you're going to do identically what the Europeans are going to do? What is it you're planning?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as Tony noted, we expect the Europeans to put in place more sanctions soon. Obviously we have taken additional steps prior to this week that they have not yet. So certainly we're acting in lockstep, and I don't have any other predictions for you in terms of the timing or when.

July 25, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Sorry. The UN says 250,000 Ukrainians have left their homes; most of them went to Russia. Do you see it as humanitarian crisis or just – not so long ago answering a similar question, you said they could be going to Russia to visit their grandmother. Do you see it as a humanitarian crisis as it is now?

MS. HARF: Well, I have – I can't confirm those numbers. I quite frankly haven't seen that from my UN reports, so I'm happy to fact-check that for you and see if we can confirm what we think the numbers are.

We know there's a humanitarian crisis here that's been – that's arisen that didn't occur there before because of what the Russian-backed separatists have done in the region. Obviously, when there's active fighting, when you have separatists like we've seen shooting down airplanes, attacking innocent people, there's going to be a humanitarian situation. So we've seen that occur. I can see if I have exact numbers for you. I just don't have them in front of me.

QUESTION: Are you saying that (inaudible) had no role in escalating the crisis? Around 300 civilians have died in the shellings.

MS. HARF: I mean, I think there's absolutely no equivalency here. Ukraine is a country with borders that Russia violated. It's not about not having a role. Russia --

QUESTION: Are you saying that, still, Kyiv had no role in escalating the crisis going – moving forward? It has --

MS. HARF: Kyiv has a --

QUESTION: It's just Russia. Are you just blaming Russia in the whole --

MS. HARF: Yes, it – yes, because Russia invaded a foreign country. The Ukrainians have a responsibility and a duty to protect their citizens and their territory, which is what they're doing. Russia should de-escalate, move back, and stop backing separatists who are taking down Ukrainian planes – fighter jets, as we've seen – and are attacking innocent civilians.

QUESTION: Marie --

QUESTION: Also --

QUESTION: -- your ambassador at NATO has said that there are now 15,000 Russian troops massed on the border. Are you in a position to repeat or elaborate on that?

MS. HARF: Yeah, we have seen troops massing at the border, as we've seen in the past. I have no reason to disagree with those numbers, yeah.

QUESTION: Okay.

Yesterday, after the briefing in which you said that there was artillery fire coming from Russian territory into Ukraine, and also that the Russians intended to provide the separatists with heavier --

MS. HARF: Multiple rocket launchers.

QUESTION: Right, multiple -- with heavier multiple rocket launchers. After the briefing, Ambassador Rice tweeted out very similar or exact -- pretty much the same thing. And now this morning --

MS. HARF: I wasn't going rogue up here, I promise.

QUESTION: No, I don't -- I'm not saying you were. And then this morning, or earlier today, I'm sure you know the Pentagon also said that there was evidence that these --

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: -- new, heavier, more powerful systems were going in. I asked -- had asked you yesterday if you could be more specific, at least about -- if you couldn't get into the intelligence about it, if you could identify -- say what these systems are.

So I'd like to repeat that question, but also ask you if you can be more -- if you can elaborate on what it is that makes you believe that this is -- that this allegation is actually factual and true.

MS. HARF: Well, we've seen indications that this is the case. We felt strongly enough to talk about it publicly. I can't underline the information that had led to that assessment. We don't have specifics about what those systems might look like to outline, but again, we're continuing to watch, continuing to gather information. And as we do, we'll attempt to share it.

QUESTION: At the Pentagon, the officials say that these are 200-caliber multiple rocket launcher systems. Is that --

MS. HARF: I don't have that detail in front of me. I don't have a reason to disagree with it; I just don't have that in front of me.

QUESTION: Okay. So two day --

MS. HARF: I'm happy to check if I can confirm that.

QUESTION: Okay. Two days ago, there was a report in a Ukrainian newspaper, which I have here, which talked about Tornados, which are what – are these 200-caliber multiple rocket launcher systems going into Ukraine from Russia. Is this what the intelligence is?

MS. HARF: That's certainly not what we could consider intelligence that underlies our assessments. I also don't have the 200-caliber detail in front of me. I'm happy to check and see on that specifically.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Obviously, we make these assessments not based on any one piece of information, even classified information. It's on a range of information. That would certainly not underpin an intelligence assessment, Matt.

QUESTION: Okay. Well – okay, that's good to know. But you can't offer us what it is, aside from --

MS. HARF: We don't have more to – we don't --

QUESTION: I mean, do you know if this report played any role in --

MS. HARF: I – let me check on that specific piece.

QUESTION: I have it for you. I can give it to you.

MS. HARF: Okay.

QUESTION: I just got it, so --

MS. HARF: Okay. Let me check on that.

And again, I didn't --

QUESTION: But it's from – but it is from two days ago, and it says that – it says what you're saying, but it's not – clearly not an intelligence report, and because in the past you have cited social media and open-source reporting --

MS. HARF: As part of the assessment.

QUESTION: I understand that. I just want to make sure that this, or this kind of thing, is not the only thing that you're going on.

MS. HARF: Having been an intelligence analyst, believe me --

QUESTION: All right.

MS. HARF: -- intelligence assessments are based on much more than just that.

QUESTION: Good. Well --

MS. HARF: And before we go public with them, we make sure we have multiple sources to back things up.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: Marie --

QUESTION: Well, I mean, I hope so. But the problem is is that you can't --

MS. HARF: But you don't trust us. It's not that I don't trust you; it's that the world doesn't --

QUESTION: It's not a question of -- it's not a question of --

MS. HARF: I can almost ask the questions for you.

QUESTION: No, it's not a question of me -- of trust. It's a question of whether you can back up your -- what you're --

MS. HARF: We've put out -- we continued to put out information, Matt. We will continue to do so.

QUESTION: I know.

MS. HARF: It is difficult, and we're happy to put out as much as we can. And we are trying to. And throughout this conflict, I think you've seen us display a very high level of credibility in terms of what we've said is happening on the ground. The Russians have been the exact opposite. So again, that doesn't -- that's not the entire ballgame there, but we will attempt to put out more as we can.

QUESTION: Was there --

QUESTION: All right. And then -- and just on the artillery that you've talked about, the -- Russia claims that the Ukrainians are also firing artillery into Russia.

MS. HARF: Well, we obviously take seriously reports of alleged Ukrainian fire into Russia. We don't -- have seen no indications of Ukraine firing back into Russia, so are unable to confirm these reports at this time. Again, the number of Russian troops across -- along the border continues to steadily increase. We have seen that in the past few days, but have seen no indications that the Ukrainians have fired back.

QUESTION: Do you have --

MS. HARF: We will continue looking into it.

QUESTION: Do you know if you – if there are people there who can – that you – Americans whether – from whatever agency of government who are – can say with certainty that --

MS. HARF: Well --

QUESTION: -- there hasn't been any firing into Russia?

MS. HARF: We have a variety of ways that we can see what's going on on the ground – a variety of different kinds of intelligence, not just of the human variety but of a number of different varieties. I'm not going to say which, if any, of those we're getting information from. Not going to go into that in any way.

QUESTION: All right. But just to put a fine point on it, you are convinced that the Russians are shelling Ukrainian positions, and it's Russians who are – Russian soldiers who are doing it, not rebels. Or --

MS. HARF: From locations within Russia --

QUESTION: Okay. You don't know who is pushing the button to fire the --

MS. HARF: Right. From --

QUESTION: But it's from Russian territory.

MS. HARF: Correct. Correct.

QUESTION: So you are convinced that artillery from Russian territory is hitting Ukrainian --

MS. HARF: Is going into – yes.

QUESTION: Going into Ukraine.

MS. HARF: Aiming at Ukrainian military outposts.

QUESTION: But you are not convinced – you can't confirm --

MS. HARF: We have seen no indications.

QUESTION: You've seen no indication that the opposite is true, that Ukrainians are sending --

MS. HARF: Correct. Correct.

QUESTION: All right.

QUESTION: Is it one incident or two incidents or is this happening --

MS. HARF: I don't have a number.

QUESTION: All right. I mean, how often -- how many times did it happen?

MS. HARF: I don't have a number for you, Said. I'm happy to see if we can share that.

QUESTION: But isn't this like -- almost like an act of war? Would something like this likely to be brought up at a Security Council forum or something?

MS. HARF: Well, I don't have anything to predict in terms of where we might discuss this further. But look, we've made very clear our concerns with it.

QUESTION: And then in terms of the sanctions that you -- yesterday, I can't remember if this came up in the brief, but the Europeans did --

MS. HARF: I think it came up briefly.

QUESTION: Do you have anything more to say about that?

MS. HARF: I don't.

QUESTION: Do you have anything more to say about what the U.S. might do now, particularly because you've made some pretty serious allegations about an escalation?

MS. HARF: I don't have anything to predict for you. We're looking at a variety of options.

QUESTION: All right. And to date, since this crisis began and since Crimea was annexed --

MS. HARF: Seems like a long time ago, doesn't it?

QUESTION: Right. You have -- the U.S. and Europe, to an extent, have imposed increasing sanctions on Russia. As a result of those or as not a result of those, have you seen any change in the Russian position?

MS. HARF: Well, we've certainly seen it have an impact on the Russian economy.

QUESTION: No, apart -- I understand that.

MS. HARF: I was getting there.

QUESTION: Have you seen -- these were steps taken to change President Putin and the Russian Government's calculus, correct?

MS. HARF: Well, I'd make two points. The first is we don't know and can't say for certain what he would have done if we hadn't done them, right, if he would've taken even more escalatory steps. We did see a number of troops amassing on the border months ago that then were gradually pulled back. So again, it's – you can't prove a negative, right? But we haven't --

QUESTION: Right. But you also can't prove that he wouldn't – that it wouldn't have escalated either.

MS. HARF: That's right.

QUESTION: So there are two sides to that coin.

MS. HARF: No, no, no. I'm not saying – I'm just saying we can't assume that he would have done – that he's done as much as he would have done regardless. But we haven't seen a de-escalation like we need to in eastern Ukraine or, of course, in Crimea, which we still believe is part of Ukraine. So clearly, it hasn't changed what President Putin has done in that regard, but we're going to keep working at it. And sanctions work best the longer they're in place. So --

QUESTION: But – okay. So the fact that Russia has not only not changed its approach according to you but also escalated its activity as you've been saying over the last couple days does not give you pause about whether sanctions are effective?

MS. HARF: No. Not at all. They've been incredibly effective against the economy, and again they're – President Putin has a choice here. He can increasingly become isolated from the international economic system if he wants to continue this escalation, or he can do the opposite.

QUESTION: All right. And then on the crash investigation, do you have anything --

MS. HARF: Let me see what I have on that for you. Hold on one second.

We do support the efforts of the Dutch and the Australians who have offered their support to the Ukrainians to secure the site with a small police force. It's my understanding I think they'll be arriving in the coming days. Obviously, we think that more needs to be done. I think it's a contingent of around 40 Dutch police officers will arrive in the coming days. So obviously, that's a key concern right now is securing the site, and of course, returning the rest of the remains to their families.

QUESTION: So as far as you're concerned, at the moment that's still a work in progress. That has not been done. Okay, and then my last one --

MS. HARF: It's been – but we do – the separatists are still in control of the area. We're concerned about looting. So --

QUESTION: My last one on this. A bunch of German lawmakers had talked about maybe having the World Cup stripped from – Russia's supposed to host the next one. Does the U.S. – does the Administration have any position on whether --

MS. HARP: I do not know if we have a position on that. I'm happy to check.

QUESTION: Okay. Could you check? It's been -- the idea has been rejected by FIFA, but I'm just --

MS. HARP: Yeah. I'm --

QUESTION: -- wondering if you have a position on this.

MS. HARP: I'm happy to check.

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you.

MS. HARP: What else? Let's move on.

Yes, Said.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) journalists. Yesterday -- about Graham Phillips, British journalist -- yesterday you were saying that Kyiv tells you that they don't have him, and now Ukrainian news agencies are saying that he was interrogated by the Ukrainian security service, and he was kicked out of the country for three years.

MS. HARP: We don't have any independent corroboration of that. We've seen those reports, but we cannot confirm that. We're still checking into it.

QUESTION: But do you believe everything that Kyiv tells you?

MS. HARP: No, we independently corroborate things, and I said I couldn't independently corroborate that.

July 24, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Russia/Ukraine
Washington, DC

MS. HARF: QUESTION: Did the Secretary find out personally from Mr. Yatsenyuk that he was resigning today?

MS. HARF: I'm not sure if that's how he found out. Let me see. I can find out the time of the call. I'm not sure if it – he found out from him or after – he called after he resigned. But the Secretary did speak with him today.

We obviously want to recognize Prime Minister Yatsenyuk's service to his country during the last several very difficult months, look forward to working with the new prime minister once they are chosen by the Rada and confirmed by the president. And folks, remember President Poroshenko had campaigned on a promise to hold new parliamentary elections as soon as possible. So under Ukrainian law, at some point, it would have been necessary for the governing coalition to disband in order to call new elections, so that's the process we're in right now.

...

QUESTION: Yesterday, I asked you about journalists who had been gone missing.

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: I think we know of two, one who CNN has been talking about today and the other who works for Russian television. Do you have anything to say about --

MS. HARF: I have a little bit. So on the person who had been working with CNN, we strongly condemn the kidnapping of Ukrainian journalist Anton Skiba by Russian-backed separatists. We demand his immediate release, along with the other hostage I believe they hold. In terms of – I think it's a British Russia Today journalist --

QUESTION: Mm-hmm.

MS. HARF: -- we do understand that the Ukrainian Government is looking into the alleged disappearance of an RT journalist. The Ukrainian Government has denied having him. We are, of course, concerned for the safety of all journalists, and all sides – all of them – must permit the media to perform its very important function. So if we get more information from the Ukrainians or if we hear more about the Russia Today person, we will update folks.

QUESTION: Can I ask – I mean, you strongly condemn the one. Is that because you know for some – for – that he --

MS. HARF: We – mm-hmm, we've been able to --

QUESTION: -- know for sure that he – how is that? Because you've heard from the Ukrainians?

MS. HARF: No, no, no, no.

QUESTION: No?

MS. HARF: From a variety – I mean, I think the CNN folks with him on the ground saw it happen.

QUESTION: Right, okay.

MS. HARF: But --

QUESTION: I'm just curious.

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: So, okay. Then today, the OSCE – you know where I'm going?

MS. HARF: No.

QUESTION: The Russians --

MS. HARF: Sometimes I do. I don't right now.

QUESTION: Well, there was a decision at the OSCE. They were going to put – they wanted to put monitors inside just over the border into Russia. The Russians refused.

MS. HARF: Okay.

QUESTION: I'm wondering if you have a --

MS. HARF: I haven't seen that, the OSCE decision.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: I do have a couple of new pieces of information about arms continuing to flow across the border since the shoot-down.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: We have new evidence that the Russians intend to deliver heavier and more powerful, multiple rocket launchers to the separatist forces in Ukraine, and have evidence that Russia is firing artillery from within Russia to attack Ukrainian military positions. This is just

some pieces of info I've been able to get from our intelligence friends for you. I can't tell you what the information is based on. I know that's disappointing to you, Matt. But was able to get --

QUESTION: Well, I don't --

MS. HARF: -- just some of the data points we've seen about the continuing arms flow across the border.

QUESTION: Right. It's not me who you need to convince. It's the rest of the world. I don't understand, if you -- coming --

MS. HARF: The rest of the world who has seen these separatists shoot down a dozen planes, who has now seen a separatist leader come out and say they had this missile, and appear to at least take credit for something similar to this. So I think there's a preponderance of evidence. We went through it yesterday; I'm happy to continue going through it.

QUESTION: No, no, no, no. No, I don't think we need to go through all of what --

MS. HARF: Okay.

QUESTION: -- you guys presented as in lieu of evidence. But I do --

MS. HARF: That's a --

QUESTION: I would like to know what you're basing this new evidence that the Russians intend to send any heavier equipment.

MS. HARF: It's based -- uh-huh. It's based on some intelligence information. I can't get into the sources and methods behind it, but I was able to be able to tell you that.

QUESTION: Is there a YouTube video or something that you can point us to --

MS. HARF: Do you have any other questions?

QUESTION: -- that would show? I'm just wondering if you -- what it is. I mean --

MS. HARF: I just said I wasn't going to give you the underlying source for it.

QUESTION: Marie, did you --

QUESTION: But that --

QUESTION: So look, it's not -- the question is --

MS. HARF: So if you prefer -- if you prefer I don't give you more information and just say nothing if I can't give you the source --

QUESTION: I'd prefer --

MS. HARF: No, I'm actually asking you a question here. If I can't give you the source and method, would you prefer I not give you the information?

QUESTION: Marie, I think that it would be best for all concerned here --

MS. HARF: Are there any other questions?

QUESTION: -- if when you make an allegation like that, you're able to back it up with something more than just "because I say so."

MS. HARF: Okay. That's not what I said. It's based on intelligence, it's not because I said so.

QUESTION: Well, it's not me that's making these allegations. I mean, you guys get up at the UN Security Council and make these allegations. The Secretary gets on the Sunday shows to make these allegations. And then when you present your evidence to back up those allegations, it has appeared to, at least for some, fall short of definitive proof. Do you --

MS. HARF: I would strongly disagree with that.

QUESTION: Do you -- so, okay, so you're saying that they're moving in new and heavier weaponry.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Can you say what kind?

MS. HARF: I said multiple rocket launchers.

QUESTION: Multiple rocket launchers of the Buk kind or of the same ones?

MS. HARF: I can check and see on specifics.

QUESTION: And I can't remember now on the rest --

MS. HARF: They're firing artillery from within Russia to attack Ukrainian military positions.

QUESTION: Do you believe that rockets, missiles, artillery, whatever fired from Russian territory took down these two Ukrainian planes, or do you not even have confirmation yet that that happened?

MS. HARF: We're still looking into exactly what brought down those planes.

QUESTION: But about --

QUESTION: So you're sure that they did?

MS. HARF: I said we're still looking into it.

QUESTION: Are you sure – I know. You're sure that the planes went down?

MS. HARF: Oh, that's my understanding. Yeah.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: I haven't heard otherwise.

QUESTION: But you don't know. I mean, the Ukrainians have said, the Ukrainians have claimed that they were shot down from – by – whatever, from Russian territory.

MS. HARF: There are some conflicting reports about the location of the --

QUESTION: And you haven't yet made a --

MS. HARF: Correct.

QUESTION: -- determination. But you are --

MS. HARF: Because we don't make determinations until we have facts, and then we present them to you as much as we can.

QUESTION: But – yes, but you are not – you are sure that the Russians are firing artillery?

MS. HARF: We have information, yes --

QUESTION: So --

MS. HARF: -- that shows that. Yes.

QUESTION: Okay. But you don't have information that they shot down the --

MS. HARF: We don't have definitive information about how those Ukrainian jets were brought down.

QUESTION: Okay. And last one on Ukraine for me: Do you have any comment about these attempts by the Ukrainian Government to close the – to ban the Communist Party?

MS. HARF: Yeah. So a couple of points on that. Let me see what I have here. The Communist Party has not been banned in Ukraine.

QUESTION: I know, it hasn't, not yet. But --

MS. HARF: Right. I'm getting there.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: The Rada's decision yesterday -- I think there's been a little confusion -- led to the Communist Party's delisting as a faction after a third of their MPs left the party. So under the banner of the Communist Party, people have been elected; they left the party, but they -- the ones that did remain in the party continue to maintain their seats and their party affiliation. It's my understanding this is draft legislation. We believe, of course, that all peaceful voices should be able to be heard. We've made that clear to the Ukrainians and we'll see where this goes from here.

QUESTION: Okay. But you don't have any concern about a move to potentially outlaw one political party?

MS. HARF: I said it's draft legislation. We believe that all peaceful voices should be able to be heard, and we'll take a look at the legislation as it advances.

QUESTION: All right. And do you -- you don't have any objection in principle to the Communist Party being able to be a party in Ukraine, do you?

MS. HARF: We do not. We do not.

QUESTION: You do not. Okay.

QUESTION: The Pentagon did say, when it came to the two Su-25 fighter jets in Ukraine, that they were, in fact, shot down. Does this give the U.S. more impetus to look at even more sanctions against Russia --

MS. HARF: Well, we're --

QUESTION: -- based on your suggestion that without Russian help, the separatists couldn't have done it themselves?

MS. HARF: It's not a suggestion; that is a fact. But setting that aside, we've imposed more sanctions since the downing of MH17. We are continuing to look at additional sanctions and to impose additional costs on Russia. That process is ongoing.

Anything else on Ukraine?

QUESTION: Is there still an option -- short of military action, which has been ruled out from --

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- are there other options besides sanctions that you might do?

MS. HARF: Besides economic pressure?

QUESTION: Right. I mean, there are international meetings that are upcoming that Russia has been invited to.

MS. HARF: That is true.

QUESTION: Is anyone looking at the --

MS. HARF: I think we're looking at a wide range of options. I mean, the -- suspending them from the G8 wasn't truly an economic -- that was also a political or diplomatic option. So we're looking at a range of options.

QUESTION: So -- but you --

QUESTION: But that was including political events that -- putting pressure on, say, the International --

MS. HARF: I haven't heard that.

QUESTION: -- Olympic Committee, putting --

MS. HARF: I haven't heard that.

QUESTION: -- it -- or on FIFA?

MS. HARF: I'm happy to check -- I haven't heard that. I'm happy to check and see if there are additional options we can outline for you, but we're focused very much on the economic piece certainly and on some of the diplomatic pieces as well.

QUESTION: Question. If the investigation does yield that it is in fact the separatists, what kind of accountability would be in store? I mean what would something like that look like outside of just --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- broader sanctions initially?

MS. HARF: We're looking at a variety of options right now. I think we need the investigation to get full access here so we can determine exactly who might have pushed the button here on this missile that was fired from a separatist-controlled territory. We're looking into that right now. I don't have any details about what accountability might look like.

July 23, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Good afternoon.

MS. HARF: Hello and welcome to the daily briefing. I have just a couple things at the top, and then happy to go into questions, of course.

First, I'm sure many of you have seen that today is the Dutch day of mourning. Today, we join King Willem-Alexander, Prime Minister Rutte, and all of the people of the Netherlands in mourning the loss of the 193 Dutch residents who died when Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 was downed over eastern Ukraine. No words can adequately express the sorrow the world feels over this loss. On behalf of the American people, we again extend our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims of this terrible tragedy.

As the President said yesterday, we will work with the Netherlands to make sure that loved ones are recovered, that a proper investigation is conducted, and that those responsible for the downing of flight MH17 are brought to justice.

And second, a quick travel update for people. Excuse me. The Secretary, as you saw, is in Jerusalem and Ramallah having some meetings today. He's met with President Abbas, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and Prime Minister Netanyahu, who I think is ongoing as well, that meeting. So has traveled there to continue discussions on the ceasefire. As we said, he's always happy to get on the plane and travel if he wants to and needs to. So, with that.

QUESTION: All right. I'm sure we'll get to Ukraine in a second, but I want to start with the Mideast.

MS. HARF: Okay.

QUESTION: Two things. One, the FAA extension of the flight ban; and second, the vote at the UN Human Rights Commission.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I'll start with the Human Rights Commission.

MS. HARF: Okay.

QUESTION: Why did you vote against forming a panel of inquiry? The statement that was given before the vote by the – your ambassador there said that whatever steps that the

commission would take should be balanced and should not single out Israel. Was it your understanding that what was approved in the end is unfair to – would be unfair to Israel?

MS. HARF: And one-sided. So we do strongly oppose today's special session at the Human Rights Council and the resulting resolution as the latest in a series of biased, anti-Israel actions at the Human Rights Council. We strongly oppose the creation of this kind of mechanism that you spoke about because it's one-sided. No one's looking here at Hamas rockets, no one proposed looking at anything else other than Israel in this case, and again, we oppose it as one-sided.

QUESTION: In her opening statement, the commissioner for human rights talked about the possibility or potential that war crimes had been committed, not just by Israel but also by Hamas. Was that not your understanding of what this commission would – your understanding of --

MS. HARF: Well, we were voting on a resolution that had certain language in it --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: -- and that was looking at certain things, and that was one-sided in nature.

QUESTION: Can – what was it precisely about the language, do you know, that was --

MS. HARF: That it was one-sided --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: -- in nature.

QUESTION: I mean, it talked – yeah, but what was that language? What was the offensive language?

MS. HARF: I can pull the specific language for you after the briefing, but --

QUESTION: The title of the resolution seemed to be respecting – or “A resolution on the respect for international law and norms in the Palestinian territories,” and then including East Jerusalem. Is that problematic?

MS. HARF: I haven't seen the specific title. As I said, the resolution in general, we view as one-sided and biased, and therefore we voted against it.

QUESTION: So you were concerned that this might turn out to be Goldstone 2?

MS. HARF: Again, we were concerned about it for being one-sided and biased, and it's something we've said, quite honestly, we've said in the past by actions this body has taken.

QUESTION: All right. Does it surprise you that you were the only country to vote against?

MS. HARF: There were a number of abstentions. That's my understanding.

QUESTION: Yes, there were 17 – all of Europe. Do you --

MS. HARF: And other countries as well. I think there were some countries in there that weren't in Europe, that aren't in Europe.

QUESTION: Right. But --

MS. HARF: Look, we make clear – as we have said repeatedly, we will stand up for Israel in the international community, even if it means standing alone, and I think you saw that today.

QUESTION: Okay. But that doesn't tell you anything, though, that you're standing alone?

MS. HARF: I don't have any more announcements to do on it, Matt.

QUESTION: All right. On the FAA decision --

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- there's still continually this line coming from some in Israel and some here that this is all a political decision, that it's --

MS. HARF: Totally inaccurate.

QUESTION: -- and it's designed to push the Israeli Government into accepting a ceasefire that it otherwise would not want.

MS. HARF: It's a totally inaccurate line, period. We – the FAA makes decisions based solely on the security and safety of American citizens, period. That is the only thing they take into account. I don't know how much more strongly I can say that. People can choose not to believe us --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: -- but those are the facts, and people aren't entitled to their own facts but certainly they can have their own opinions.

QUESTION: Okay. Do you know, has – were there any – aside from the call that Prime Minister Netanyahu made last night, I guess, and then his meetings today --

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- I presume that he brought it up again in the meetings with the Secretary?

MS. HARF: I don't have a readout yet.

QUESTION: I'm not asking you to speak for that, but --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- you're not there. But do you -- are you aware of any other interactions between the Israelis and the State Department on this issue?

MS. HARF: On this? Not to my knowledge. I'm happy to check. I mean, we have folks on the ground, obviously. I just don't know.

QUESTION: I understand.

MS. HARF: And look, we do understand that the Israelis want to return to normal air travel in Israel. Obviously, they want to restore a calm and normal life. We want them to be able to do as well. That's why we're trying to help broker a ceasefire. That's the purpose of everything the Secretary is doing.

QUESTION: So would you -- I mean, how likely -- and I know you can't speak for the FAA, so let's talk about just the -- your -- the State Department's Travel Warning which preceded this. At least --

MS. HARF: And I'm -- let me make a point on the Travel Warning, though, because you asked about this yesterday, because there were some conspiracy theories that you were bringing up as well about why the timing. It takes a while to get travel updates updated and done, and travel warnings updated, but we did issue security messages from our embassy and consulate on the 8th, 9th, and 11th re: rocket attacks. So it's not like yesterday suddenly we thought there was a security issue, which you mentioned. It's been a consistent conversation we've had with American citizens.

QUESTION: Right. But --

MS. HARF: So I'm pushing back on the timing issue a little bit.

QUESTION: Okay. I mean, it wasn't me making the argument, I was --

MS. HARF: Well, it was you asking the question.

QUESTION: Well, I was asking you about the criticism that was --

MS. HARF: So I'm pushing back on that criticism.

QUESTION: Got you. Okay.

MS. HARF: Yep.

QUESTION: Is it likely that either of these things, the Travel Warning or the FAA warning, are going to be lifted before a ceasefire is ordered?

MS. HARF: I have honestly no predictions to make. We constantly make decisions based on the situation on the ground. The Travel Warning obviously is under our purview. We'll continue to look at the situation. The FAA can speak to their processes as well.

QUESTION: Right. But the --

MS. HARF: I have no way to make a judgment about likelihood on either.

QUESTION: Okay. All right. So I'll leave that and then just go back to my UNRWA questions from the other day.

QUESTION: Well, the Secretary was -- Matt --

QUESTION: Yeah.

QUESTION: Can we just -- can I just go back to --

QUESTION: Sure.

MS. HARF: Sure.

QUESTION: Because yesterday it was asked about Hamas's capabilities of --

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: Do you have anything further? And you said you would.

MS. HARF: I did. I got a little bit for you. Give me one second. So Hamas does have rockets that can reach Ben Gurion Airport. During current fighting, Hamas rockets have landed north of the airport, although the accuracy of their rockets does remain limited. Israel's Iron Dome system, which, as you know, we worked very closely with them to develop and fund, has monitored and, with quite a high degree of success, destroyed many of the incoming rockets which could reach this area as well as other areas. Hamas's anti-aircraft missile capabilities are still being determined. We don't have confirmation that Hamas has launched heat-seeking anti-aircraft missile during the current conflict or that Hamas has access to the type of anti-aircraft missiles like those we saw -- judge bring down Malaysian aircraft in Ukraine.

So I tried to get a little more about the capabilities for you.

QUESTION: Yeah, thank you very much for that. I mean, it's helpful to get perspective. Was that kind of thing taken into consideration, do you know?

MS. HARF: I'm guessing all of that was taken into consideration. The FAA worked very closely with the intelligence community, with people that do analysis on these kind of things before they make these determinations. So I'm assuming it was in this case.

QUESTION: So did you -- when you said Hamas has not used heat-seeking --

MS. HARF: There's no confirmation --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: -- that Hamas has launched heat-seeking anti-aircraft missiles during the current conflict.

QUESTION: Is -- do you -- is it your assessment that they actually have these kinds of weapons.

MS. HARF: Not to my knowledge. I'm happy to check. I don't know the answer to that, Matt.

QUESTION: Marie, on the FAA ruling, I mean considering that when this conflict began, Israel had, like, seven Iron Domes. Now they have 10. And the rocket firing has really been reduced dramatically. Why is this such a -- why such a --

MS. HARF: Because a rocket landed very close to the airport, and I think if you were a passenger on an airliner taking off or landing at that airport, you'd be pretty nervous about that.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Iron Dome has been very successful, but security of America citizens is top priority, and that's why the FAA made this decision.

QUESTION: Can I go back to the Human Rights Commission?

MS. HARF: Just one second. Let me say one more thing about the FAA.

QUESTION: Okay. Sure. Oh, sorry.

MS. HARF: I know you probably saw Jen's email but -- last night -- that the FAA notice to airlines does not apply to military aircraft, which is why he could land.

QUESTION: Right. So, but on that --

MS. HARF: I just wanted to clarify that, that was a Taken Question --

QUESTION: But on that, you said that if you were a passenger you would be pretty nervous. Was the Secretary nervous flying into --

MS. HARF: Secretary --

QUESTION: He's never nervous?

MS. HARF: Well, as you saw, we didn't announce the trip until it was down.

QUESTION: No, no. I understand that.

MS. HARF: Yep.

QUESTION: But you said that if you were a passenger on a plane flying in --

MS. HARF: The Secretary's not nervous, Matt.

QUESTION: He is not nervous.

MS. HARF: The Secretary's very happy to be there meeting with people right now.

QUESTION: And can you speak for your other colleagues?

MS. HARF: I'm not --

QUESTION: Was anyone on the plane --

MS. HARF: This is a ridiculous line of questioning.

QUESTION: No, it's not --

MS. HARF: Yes. Said. Wait. We're going back to Said.

QUESTION: -- because if it's a danger, it's a danger. And if it's not, if the Secretary thinks it's not a danger that's something else.

MS. HARF: We're going back to Said.

QUESTION: I just wanted to follow-up on the Human Rights Commission.

MS. HARF: He was very -- he and our whole team were very comfortable landing at Ben Gurion.

QUESTION: Okay. Which would seem to, I don't know, belie the FAA's concerns, no?

MS. HARF: Take that up with the FAA.

Yes.

QUESTION: I will.

QUESTION: Yeah. On the Human Rights Commission, are you opposed in principle to have any kind of commission to look into possible war crimes by either side, to go one --

MS. HARF: We're opposed to one-sided and biased inquiries of any kind.

QUESTION: And that -- if -- you believe that this one --

MS. HARF: We believe this one today was.

QUESTION: -- this one is one-sided?

MS. HARF: Would have been and that's why we voted against it.

QUESTION: What would -- okay. What in the language of this resolution that makes you say that it is one-sided?

MS. HARF: Well, I am happy to see if there's specific language that we can point to. Again, it was what they were -- that would be evaluated in the resolution and in this commission of inquiry, what they would be looking at was purely on one side, which by definition, I think, makes it one-sided.

QUESTION: So it's not really a knee-jerk kind of reaction, as we have seen in the past? Every time there is an effort to look into Israel's --

MS. HARF: Well, unfortunately the Human Rights Council has often put forward one-sided documents. The international community has often put forward one-sided documents -- excuse me -- and we have opposed those as well.

QUESTION: Okay. Now I asked you yesterday on the hospitals -- the bombing of hospitals, and so on.

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: Both ABC News and NBC News, they followed -- they accompanied medics and ambulances and so on and went to the hospitals and house and so on, and they saw no evidence of firing rockets from there. So what makes you think that these hospitals have been used to launch rockets or to hide rockets or to hide fighters and so on?

MS. HARF: Well, we have evidence --

QUESTION: Do you have solid evidence?

MS. HARF: Generally speaking -- not speaking about any specific hospital, Said, or any specific target of Israeli activity, we have evidence throughout many years of Hamas using hospitals and schools, ambulances, other civilian places to hide rockets, to hide fighters. We've

seen that throughout this conflict. Again, I'm not making a commentary on any one specific hospital or location, but we have seen that. We have seen Hamas do that in the past and have done that in this conflict.

QUESTION: Now I just want to go --

MS. HARF: And that's not acceptable. I think if you are a Palestinian living in Gaza who just wants to go use a hospital or a school, you would not want Hamas using them to store rockets in.

QUESTION: Okay. Now let me ask you about the ceasefire points.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: It seems that the Egyptians, at least for now, are not flexible or are unwilling to sort of introduce any new element.

MS. HARF: I have no idea how you could even make that assessment. Everybody who is in these negotiations is not talking about them publicly. We're talking about them privately.

QUESTION: The Egyptians are talking about their proposal publicly.

MS. HARF: Well, you're making one assessment, and I think that we are --

QUESTION: I am not making it. They are. They're saying --

MS. HARF: You called them inflexible.

QUESTION: No, I said inflexible. They said that they --

MS. HARF: Right.

QUESTION: -- what they submitted or what they proposed last week stands, that they're --

MS. HARF: Well, we're in discussions about what a ceasefire might look like. That's why the Secretary is shuttling back and forth between Cairo and Jerusalem and Ramallah so he can see if we can get a ceasefire here. What the eventual contours of that looks like are being discussed right now.

QUESTION: And my last question on this: Today the Palestinian Authority submitted to Secretary Kerry their own version of what a ceasefire agreement should look like. Do you have any reaction to that --

MS. HARF: I can't confirm that. I can't confirm that report, Said.

QUESTION: You cannot confirm that report.

MS. HARF: I cannot confirm that report. I'm not going to comment on any of the rumors out there about what these negotiations look like, a line that should be familiar to everyone in this room.

QUESTION: Although you won't comment on the specifics --

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: -- there was something that Tony Blinken said earlier today about demilitarization of Gaza. Are you more concerned with getting an immediate -- just an end to the fighting right now, or is -- and is demilitarization something that would be later on? In other words, that's not necessarily a part of the negotiations going on now?

MS. HARF: So obviously, our top priority is getting a ceasefire and achieving a ceasefire. What the contours of that ceasefire will look like, I'm obviously not going to outline. But longer term, the issue of rocket fire does need to be addressed. We're very serious about that. Again, how that looks like, what that looks like, I'm not going to get into the details of that either.

QUESTION: Okay, so it's -- but it's fair to say that some kind of demilitarization or some kind of dealing with the rocket fire in the future is not necessarily on the table right now. What you're more --

MS. HARF: I'm not telling you what or what is not on the table right now. What I'm saying is we need a ceasefire. What that ceasefire looks like, I'm not going to detail. But longer term, we do need to deal with the rocket fire.

QUESTION: On my UNRWA question from yesterday, do you know if the -- so there was this -- they confirmed a second -- finding a second batch -- cache of rockets in a school. Do you know how those were handled? And more broadly, had your discussions with the UN, with UNRWA, with the PA and Israel come to a better option for dealing with things like this?

MS. HARF: We're still having those discussions. I'd refer you to UNRWA to discuss the second batch. I don't have all of the details on that. I think there's been some confusing information out there. They could probably speak better to what happened to that other batch of rockets. But the conversations continue, and I think hopefully we'll get to a better path forward.

QUESTION: Okay, so you're not exactly sure what they did --

MS. HARF: I think it's probably best for UNRWA to speak to this. They have the most up-to-date information.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Yes, Nicole.

QUESTION: Is there any discussion about structuring this ceasefire through a UN Security Council resolution or working through the Security Council instead of trying to put together something on a bilateral or multilateral basis?

MS. HARF: I haven't heard of that. Obviously I'm not going to talk about specifics that are being discussed in the room, but what we're focused on is working with Egypt and other regional partners – of course, with Israel and the Palestinians – to see if we can get something here.

QUESTION: One more on the flight cancellations.

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: It's not just Matt that's been critical and conspiratorial. Senator Cruz – (laughter)
–

QUESTION: I haven't been critical or conspiratorial.

MS. HARF: You're being put in a category with Senator Cruz, so let's see where this one goes. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Senator --

MS. HARF: I can't wait for this.

QUESTION: Yeah. Thanks a lot, Lucas. That's not --

MS. HARF: You're welcome, Matt. Thank Lucas later.

QUESTION: Senator Cruz just released a statement saying that the FAA's flight suspension to Israel is economic blackmail and that the Obama Administration is --

MS. HARF: It's ridiculous.

QUESTION: -- doing this to punish Israel.

MS. HARF: It's ridiculous and offensive, quite frankly. The FAA takes its responsibilities very seriously. I will speak for them in that case. They make these decisions based solely on the security and safety of American citizens, period. For anyone to suggest otherwise, it's just ridiculous, Lucas.

QUESTION: His argument is that tourism is an \$11 billion industry for Israel and that while these flights are cancelled and Israel is losing money, the aid to Hamas continues.

MS. HARF: Well, we certainly care about Israel's tourism industry as well, but we care more about the rockets being stopped from coming into Israel to kill innocent civilians in Israel. We care more about getting a ceasefire, and we care more about protecting American citizens. So

clearly, I think Senator Cruz is completely wrong on this. We make decisions about security based solely on what's in the best interest of American citizens. And look, one of the reasons – the main reason, if not, that Secretary Kerry is investing so much energy into getting a ceasefire is so Israel can return to normalcy, so they can return flights, so we can move past the Travel Warning, so Israelis and visitors and anyone don't have to run to bomb shelters because Hamas is firing rockets at them. So I'd urge him to take another look at his comments on this.

QUESTION: But you can still fly to Beirut, can't you, and other hotspots around the country?

MS. HARF: The FAA has a full list of places that we don't fly. Someone asked about North Korea the other day. You cannot fly, I think, places in North Korea as well. So I would take a look at that. But there are times – in parts of Ukraine, Crimea we have warnings out as well. And these are all designed to protect American citizens here. And again, this is a temporary notice. The 24-hour notice has been renewed for another 24 hours. Our goal is to get this ceasefire in place as soon as possible so we don't have to take these steps.

QUESTION: Marie, if I may follow – just to follow up on Nicole's question. The sort of – what format this ceasefire should take? Back in 2009, there was a resolution – a UN Security Council Resolution 1860, and then in 2012 or just an agreement. Is it your feeling or this Department's feeling that if you frame it in a United Nations Security Council resolution, would be more robust and would have to be – have better chance of being sustainable?

MS. HARF: Well, we've talked about 2012 as sort of --

QUESTION: Right, right.

MS. HARF: -- one of the standards that we're looking at here. I don't have anything beyond that on what the discussions look like.

QUESTION: Same topic, real quick.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: The Secretary said he was going to Cairo, back to Cairo. Any confirmation or details of when?

MS. HARF: I'm sure he will. I don't know when. I'm not sure we know when.

QUESTION: He said immediately after the – or not immediately, but after the (inaudible).

MS. HARF: I don't have details on timing, but he will eventually return to Cairo and could possibly return to Jerusalem and Ramallah.

QUESTION: There have been some riots in Paris over the issue of Gaza. I'm wondering if you see that as indicative of any larger international feelings towards either side.

MS. HARF: Well, let me say first that we obviously have seen some of the horrific anti-Semitic and anti-Israel comments that have come up during some of these protests; not all of them, but some, which we would of course strongly condemn as we always do. But I've been asked about these for three days and I don't think my line's changed that people have a right to freely express themselves. That's something that is important to us, but we do want people to remember that Israel has a right to defend itself and that its citizens are living under constant threat of rockets from Hamas that are the responsibility of Hamas to end. And I would just caution people to keep that in mind.

QUESTION: Last thing for me, and it sets a perfect segue of – because we've heard --

MS. HARF: Great.

QUESTION: -- that phraseology any number of times from the White House, from this podium as well.

MS. HARF: We are remarkably consistent.

QUESTION: Yes, I know. How do we square that no country would tolerate rocket fire with things like Pakistan and Yemen and rocket fire that has killed civilians from the U.S.?

MS. HARF: Well, they're wholly different, and I'll tell you why.

QUESTION: Please.

MS. HARF: Hamas is a terrorist organization firing rockets indiscriminately with the purpose to kill civilians. Our counterterrorism operations, wherever they are, are taken with a great degree of care to protect civilian life. The President has spoken about this several times in speeches, and they are in fact designed to go after terrorists who are trying to kill more civilians. So any equivalency is just – I guess the word of the day – ridiculous and offensive.

QUESTION: And so when mistakes are made, it's a mistake, it's – you take every care –

MS. HARF: Right. The President has been very clear that we take extraordinary care to prevent civilian casualties, which is the exact opposite of what Hamas does, who tries to kill as many civilians as they can. We take extraordinary care when conducting counterterrorism operations.

QUESTION: Thank you.

...

QUESTION: I was wondering if the Department has any comment on reports or Ukrainian Government claims that two more planes have been shot down from Russia.

MS. HARF: Yes, we have seen those reports. We are still looking into them. We have, of course, seen a history of the separatists shooting down planes in the past, I think about a dozen

before MH17. And look, if true – and we hopefully will be able to confirm whether it's true soon – it would only be further evidence that Russian-backed separatists are using advanced surface-to-air weaponry less than a week after shooting down a civilian airliner and killing 298 people. Again, it's hard to imagine any of this happening without Russian support.

QUESTION: Dovetailing off that, I mean, you said to me yesterday that the fighting is by and large outside of the 25-mile radius of the crash site.

MS. HART: Forty kilometer --

QUESTION: Yeah. Or whatever.

MS. HART: -- or whatever. But numbers matter.

QUESTION: At this point, I think it was three miles outside of the crash site. I mean --

MS. HART: No. I think you have wrong information there. There hasn't been -- they have maintained -- the Ukrainians have maintained a ceasefire. The 40-kilometer ceasefire they have declared around the crash site, the Ukrainians have maintained it.

QUESTION: Okay. Are you concerned that a break in ceasefire could impede the investigation?

MS. HART: Well, obviously, we would be concerned about the separatists not upholding a ceasefire. The Ukrainians have repeatedly shown their willingness and ability to do so.

...

QUESTION: Well, yesterday -- this is sort of related Ukraine, I guess, and Russia. Yesterday the intel community said they were going to lay out evidence sort of backing their assertions about who brought down Malaysia Airlines 17. They did lay out a bunch of different things, but they didn't actually lay out the real documentation that supports those assertions. Why haven't we seen --

MS. HART: I'm not sure exactly what you're looking for. Well, they did a couple things yesterday. They showed -- they walked through an intelligence assessment case and they talked about some additional pieces of declassified information that I can walk through today that bolsters our case that we know what happened here. They also showed imagery of training facilities; they showed imageries of the site, including a trajectory based on classified information that they were able to provide that showed the trajectory of the SA-11. So those are important, and let's get -- let me finish --

QUESTION: Yeah, go ahead.

MS. HART: -- and then you can keep following up.

So a couple things they said yesterday, which I think are significant which we had not set before, that the audio data provided to the press – and we talked a lot about these open source reports, right, these audio messages that people have said are certain people or that prove things – they were provided to the press by the Ukrainians. It was evaluated by the intelligence community analysts, who confirmed these were authentic conversations between known separatist leaders.

And then another key point they talked about yesterday, and we can talk more about the rest of this, is the – this notion the Russians have put out there about a Ukrainian fighter jet. They've argued that an Su-25 fighter might have shot down the aircraft with an air-to-air missile. They have judged that engagement would be implausible for the following reasons: The Su-25 is a ground attack aircraft. The only missiles it carries are short-range – excuse me – are short-range, infrared-guided missiles. Ground photography from the crash site is consistent with the expected damage from a surface-to-air missile, but it is – does not correspond, in fact is inconsistent with what we would expect to see for an air-to-air missile, as Russia claims.

Third, Russia – this is a little separately here – has also released a map with the alleged locations of Ukrainian SA-11 units within range of the crash. This is another red herring they've put out there. We are confident that this information is incorrect. The nearest Ukrainian operational SA-11 unit is located well out of the range from both the launch and the crash site. So part of their case yesterday was not only giving more information about what we know, but giving our professional, technical assessment of some of the Russian claims that, I think, we have tried to increasingly knock down.

QUESTION: When you said – when they – when you said they showed evidence of this, what do you mean by that, “they showed”? They – I mean, did they have a presentation? I --

MS. HARF: Well, they – they did. They did. They showed some imagery, they showed a number of images; they showed some maps, they showed some graphics. I'm happy for you to get in touch with DNI Public Affairs, who can probably give you that packet that they showed. They showed some – one of the maps that we actually have posted on our Facebook page and our Kyiv Embassy that shows the trajectory of the SA-11 missile. That trajectory is based on classified information. I can't detail all of what that information is, but that is based on the information we have.

QUESTION: And some of the evidence U.S. is relying on are social media postings and videos made public by the Ukrainian Government. Have those all been authenticated?

MS. HARF: Again, that's why I said the audio data, which is part of the social media, has been authenticated by the intelligence community analysts. Social media is obviously only one part of the puzzle here. It's something we look at, but obviously, we back everything up to the extent that we can when we can with other intelligence as well.

...

QUESTION: On your three things that you say were new: one, on the audio data being analyzed and being authenticated. That was not new yesterday. That was actually in the statement that the Embassy in Kyiv put out on Sunday morning --

MS. HARF: Okay.

QUESTION: -- before Secretary Kerry appeared on those --

MS. HARF: That the intelligence community had authenticated all of it? I -- it's my understanding that that was not all out there on Sunday, but I'm happy to check.

QUESTION: Well, I believe it was. But I mean, there's no -- it doesn't --

MS. HARF: Okay. Well, I disagree with you, but I'm happy to check.

What's the next thing?

QUESTION: Well, you can look at the statement. I mean, it says that they've been authenticated. So I would say that that wasn't new.

MS. HARF: Okay. Happy to check.

QUESTION: Secondly, I'm not sure that -- I know that there were some suggestions that the Ukrainian fighter plane shot down this -- with a missile, but the --

MS. HARF: So the Russians have basically had a couple of alternative explanations.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: There was the Ukrainian fighter jet. I think we -- the intelligence community went to great lengths yesterday to show why that's not the case.

The other -- one of the other things they said was that it was a Ukrainian SA-11 system that the Ukrainians had fired. Again, I think they made very clear why that's not also the case.

QUESTION: But the theory that -- or the -- I don't know what you would -- the suggestion isn't necessarily that the Ukrainian jet -- I mean, you have -- you've discovered that the Ukrainian jet was in the vicinity, but it was not capable of shooting (inaudible) down --

MS. HARF: No, I can't confirm that there was even a Ukrainian -- we have no confirmation that I have seen that there was a Ukrainian jet.

QUESTION: Oh, that there was even --

MS. HARF: I'm not saying there wasn't. I just can't confirm it.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: But regardless, the notion that this kind of Ukrainian jet the Russians are talking about could have done this with the kind of missile and the kind of debris we've seen -- it just doesn't match up.

QUESTION: Because I think the suggestion is that whoever fired this missile may have been shooting for that plane, like what we saw today in terms of a shoot-down.

MS. HARF: Which in no way makes it better.

QUESTION: Well, I'm not saying it does. I'm not saying it does at all, but it's not --

MS. HARF: And I don't know what the intentions are of whoever was on the ground pushing the button. I don't.

QUESTION: And the last thing about this --

MS. HARF: Clearly -- well clearly, I know the intentions were to launch a sophisticated missile and to kill people. Whether those -- they were trying to kill Ukrainian military officers or civilians, we're still waiting to find out.

QUESTION: I -- yeah, okay. I'm not arguing that one is better than the other.

MS. HARF: Okay. I know.

QUESTION: I'm not saying that.

MS. HARF: Just responding to your question.

QUESTION: I'm just saying -- and then on the -- this trajectory thing that you said was put out by the Embassy --

MS. HARF: I didn't say that was new yesterday. We posted that a few days ago.

QUESTION: Right. But I mean, if you just look at that -- a lay person looking at it, it's a line drawn on a satellite photo with no -- nothing to back it up.

MS. HARF: Well, as I said, it's based on a series of classified information --

QUESTION: Which we have to --

MS. HARF: -- which we are --

QUESTION: -- we have to take the leap of faith to believe that -- right?

MS. HARF: Well, Matt, we are trying to put as much out of this out --

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. HARF: -- information out about this as possible. We are trying very hard to do so. It is a process that takes, I think, more time than any of us, certainly you or I, would like.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: But I think I would make the point that it's much more time-consuming to declassify real evidence than to make it up, which is what the Russians have been doing for days now.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, be that as it may, are you saying that at some point, the IC is hopeful to --

MS. HARF: We are working to --

QUESTION: -- that they will be able to put --

MS. HARF: We're working to get more information declassified and put out there as quickly as we can. It's just a difficult process (inaudible).

QUESTION: Okay. But do you understand that given the conflicting claims, no matter how ridiculous you say the other side's version is and no matter how implausible it might be -- but saying that you've put together the imagery showing the root of this --

MS. HARF: Trajectory.

QUESTION: -- trajectory showing imagery.

MS. HARF: Just one piece. It's one piece of evidence.

QUESTION: Well, I know, but anyone can draw a line on a map. They can. I mean, I'm not saying that --

MS. HARF: That's not what our intelligence community does. That's not what the U.S. Government does when we go out there and present a case to the world. We have --

QUESTION: So --

QUESTION: Can I just --

MS. HARF: Wait. We have to protect sensitive sources and methods. We have to, because if we don't, we won't be able to get this kind of information in the future if they're compromised because of a declassification. Believe me, I want to be able to declassify more.

QUESTION: Right, okay.

MS. HART: They want to be able to declassify more. And it's not about a leap of faith. We are laying out a very comprehensive argument based on a number of different pieces, right. So if you look at all of them in totality --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HART: -- look at the entire picture, it presents a very compelling case about the kind of missile, where it was fired from. Those are the two key pieces, right. The kind of missile that took down this plane we are very confident is an SA-11, we are very confident it was fired from Russian-controlled territory. We are very confident that the two alternate stories the Russians put forward aren't plausible.

Who put their finger on the trigger? We still need to find that out.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HART: But suffice to say, the Russian separatists we believe fired this, in general, could not be doing what they're doing without the Russians. And responsibility lays at the feet of President Putin, not just for this but for every incident that we have seen throughout this conflict, period.

QUESTION: All right. So Putin is -- it's Putin whose fault this is; that's what you're saying?

MS. HART: I think I was just pretty clear.

QUESTION: What you're saying -- okay. So you said that -- you say it's a very compelling case, but you -- it is a circumstantial case, is it not?

MS. HART: It is a case based on a number of different pieces of evidence, Matt -- across the board, a number of different pieces. Whether you're looking at what we talked about yesterday, whether you're looking at what we've seen on social media, whether you're looking at the kind of SA-11 which is a missile that essentially gets fired straight up does what it does, and that's exactly what we saw in this case as well.

So we've laid out a very detailed case. We will continue to declassify as much as we can. But again, we've been very open about our assessments here. The Russians have repeatedly lied about what's happening on the ground. They said there weren't troops in Crimea when there were troops all over Crimea. So there's just no credibility on their side. And I understand the need to put out more information, but look, the notion that they've shot down dozens -- over a dozen planes now -- and this is just the one that wasn't them -- also just doesn't pass the common sense test.

QUESTION: Marie --

QUESTION: Okay. Hold on a second. So – but – and I understand the – your desire to protect sources and methods, but we have here an incredible tragedy where almost 300 people died.

MS. HARF: I agree.

QUESTION: Is that – protecting sources and methods are more important than getting --

MS. HARF: No.

QUESTION: -- to the bottom of who --

MS. HARF: Well, those two things aren't mutually exclusive here. A, if we think an investigation can go forward, then we'll get to the bottom of what happened here. We believe we do have a good assessment about the things I've talked about. The investigation about who did it specifically to a person is ongoing. But look, part of the reason we protect sources and methods is because we want to be able to see these things in the future if they tragically – something like this were to happen again in the same area, the way we found out information this time. So --

QUESTION: So you're saying that – but just to be clear, that the imagery, the trajectory imagery that you have that --

MS. HARF: In that one sheet, mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Right, right, right, exactly.

MS. HARF: I think it's the green line.

QUESTION: That is – yes, that there are sources and methods for how you know that trajectory --

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: -- that people are concerned are going to be somehow --

MS. HARF: Correct.

QUESTION: -- tainted if --

MS. HARF: Correct. Not just tainted, but compromised.

QUESTION: That are going to be compromised if you --

MS. HARF: Yes, correct.

QUESTION: I mean --

MS. HARF: Well --

QUESTION: Okay. I guess --

MS. HARF: Having spent six years in the intelligence community --

QUESTION: I know. That's what I -- I know that's what --

MS. HARF: -- I know there are a variety of ways we can figure these things out, many of which are quite sensitive and many of which I think we don't want to lose.

QUESTION: All right.

MS. HARF: So look, believe me, I'm pushing my colleagues at the DNI --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: -- as much as I love these --

QUESTION: Do you -- but I --

MS. HARF: -- conversations with you about this. We are pushing and they're pushing, and we'll see if we can get more.

QUESTION: Okay. But do you -- I mean, would you expect --

MS. HARF: I have no prediction.

QUESTION: -- or you don't know? You don't expect more or you --

MS. HARF: I have no idea.

QUESTION: All right.

MS. HARF: Look, I think there will be. I think we're just working through it.

QUESTION: Okay. One other thing that's unrelated to the intel.

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: Are you aware of the reports that several journalists have been detained or kidnapped -- one a Ukrainian, the other one a Brit? Do you know anything about this?

MS. HARF: I saw some reports about some journalists. I think we're still trying to track down the facts there. I'll see if there's more after I get off the podium.

QUESTION: Okay. Ambassador Pyatt had tweeted something about --

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- one of the --

MS. HARF: Yeah. Obviously, we are concerned about these reports. Let me see if there's more details.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: I just wanted to ask you -- you said the blame lays at Mr. Putin's feet just now.

MS. HARF: Yes, yes.

QUESTION: Does that mean that they are involved in issuing the orders issued down there?

MS. HARF: I didn't say that. I said that these Russian separatists who we strongly believe fired this missile would not be there operating without the support of President Putin and the Russian Government, would not have been trained without the support of President Putin and the Russian Government, would not be armed without the support of President Putin and the Russian Government. They would not be there doing what they're doing, period, so they could fire an SA-11 without the support of President Putin and the Russian Government. Yes, direct responsibility lays there.

QUESTION: And also -- okay. I wanted to ask you also on integrity of the crash site.

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: Who's in control now? I mean --

MS. HARF: Let me see if I -- the Dutch are leading -- give me one second -- the investigation.

Just a couple quick updates. The black boxes are now in the United Kingdom. The reason for doing so is that the British have a specific kind of aircraft forensics laboratory needed, and the UK Air Accidents Investigation Branch is a highly respected and capable investigation authority.

Let me answer a few more taken questions from yesterday, and then I'll get to your question, Said.

QUESTION: Sure.

MS. HARF: Not all of the remains were, tragically, handed over yesterday. Potentially, the remains of some 100 people are still missing. We don't have exact numbers. Obviously, it is critical that international investigators, led by the Dutch, receive immediate and full access to the crash site.

In terms of access to the site, we – they have on the ground in Ukraine begun the difficult work of piecing together exactly what happened here. Today, we understand that they do have better access than they've had in the past days. We are, though, troubled by reports of looting, evidence tampering, and the failure to transport, as I just said, all of the remains of all of the victims to Kharkiv and into Dutch custody. So that is the latest I have in terms of the situation and the investigation.

QUESTION: India?

QUESTION: On Ukraine itself?

MS. HARF: On Ukraine?

QUESTION: Hold on.

MS. HARF: Yeah, on Ukraine.

QUESTION: Based on the intelligence information that you released yesterday and what you have been saying today, it looks like it was a case of mistaken identity by the Ukraine separatists that hit the Malaysian plane.

MS. HARF: That's not what they said at all.

QUESTION: That's what you are concluding, right?

MS. HARF: No. That's not what I said either. I said we don't know yet the intentions of the people who fired the SA-11 from the pro-Russian separatist-controlled territory. We just don't know what their intentions are.

QUESTION: So my question is --

MS. HARF: It may – they may have been targeting a civilian airliner; they may have been targeting a Ukrainian fighter jet, which they've done over a dozen times now. Either way, they're clearly trying to kill people with an SA-11.

QUESTION: So when the Malaysian Airlines was passing through that part, there were some other passenger planes which was crossing that area, including one of Air India, which was under 25 miles away from the Malaysian planes. And then plane carrying Indian prime minister was passed around one hour before that.

MS. HARF: I haven't heard that.

QUESTION: Do you know from intelligence information that any of these planes were – could have been a target or could have been hit by these missiles here?

MS. HARF: I haven't heard – I haven't heard that.

QUESTION: Can you check?

MS. HARF: I can check. I haven't heard it, though.

...

QUESTION: Thank you.

Madam, what message do you have for the grieving families from this terrible incident? What they are asking the United Nations and the United States and the global community: Are we safe to fly in the future, and what steps are you going to take in the future that such incident doesn't happen? Because many families believe not only these terrorists here in this area, but many other terrorists may have access also to the similar weapons, including in Pakistan or Afghanistan, and anybody could be the next target.

MS. HARF: Well look, I think you heard the President speak about this. I spoke about it at the beginning of the briefing, that one of the reasons, if not the most important reason, that we are so committed to finding out what happened here is so we can hold the people who did it accountable, that people cannot get away with shooting civilian airliners out of the sky. That's just wholly unacceptable, and that countries that support these kind of separatists, like we've seen Russia do, also need to be held accountable. And that's why you've seen additional sanctions; that's why we've said there could be further steps, because that's just not something that we will allow, that we will stand by and watch, and we do need to get to the bottom of what happened here.

QUESTION: Do you believe, Madam, that other terrorists like al-Qaida in Pakistan or Abu Baghdadi in Iraq, who have challenged already India, U.S., and other countries – that they may have similar weapons?

MS. HARF: I can check and see who else we think has these weapons. I just don't know that off the top of my head.

QUESTION: Thank you, Madam

...

QUESTION: One more on Ukraine.

Senator Carl Levin called this an act of war. What is your response?

MS. HARF: Well, look, we've been very clear about what's happening in eastern Ukraine. You have separatists backed by a foreign country who have invaded and been killing people with impunity, who've been shooting down Ukrainian military jets, who've been – who've now taken down a civilian airliner, who've been terrorizing populations in eastern Ukraine.

I would also note, just for balance here, that there have been some areas liberated by Ukrainian forces, where people are able to go about their lives without the fear of separatist violence. The Ukrainian Government is providing food and water and hope, I would say, to the residents in those liberated areas. And one of the main places they have restored electricity, water, and train service is to Slovyansk, which we've talked about. It was on July 9th, so it was a little while ago. But we have seen steady progress in terms of them regaining territory.

QUESTION: But is this alleged act by the separatists, or by Russia, an act of war?

MS. HARF: I don't think I have any more terminology to put around it, Lucas. I'm happy to check and see.

QUESTION: An act of terror?

MS. HARF: I'm happy to check and see if there's more terminology I'd like to put around it.

QUESTION: Your – when you say that the blame for this lies directly at President Putin's feet, does that also mean that you think that his call – some – seemingly more conciliatory call yesterday for – to support a full and open investigation, do you think that's duplicitous? Is that --

MS. HARF: Well, I just think that the words need to be backed up by actions, which, unfortunately, we haven't seen very much of from the Russians lately.

QUESTION: Got you. I had one question semi-related to this.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: That is yesterday you talked about the French going ahead with their transfer of this Mistral ship to the Russians. It turns out today that the Brits have also been continuing to --

MS. HARF: I don't think that's actually --

QUESTION: Is that not correct?

MS. HARF: -- accurate. No. And I'm not sure it's in my book here. I have – they put out a statement very strongly denying this.

QUESTION: Denying it, okay.

MS. HARF: I will send it to you as soon as I get off the podium. I'm not sure I stuck it in my book here, but --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: -- they have gone on the record.

QUESTION: And denied the earlier reports. Okay.

MS. HARF: Yes, so --

QUESTION: So in other words --

MS. HARF: -- I'm sorry I don't have it.

QUESTION: No, no, it's okay.

MS. HARF: Apologies to my British colleagues who may be watching.

QUESTION: You don't need to -- I'm not asking you to respond on behalf the British Government. But I'm just saying --

MS. HARF: No, no, no, but they -- no, but I did have that and I wanted to -- we'll get it to you.

QUESTION: But you accept their denial and you don't have any questions about their --

MS. HARF: We don't have any questions about the British.

QUESTION: What about French?

MS. HARF: Period, sort of full stop. Well, we have big questions --

QUESTION: Ever?

MS. HARF: -- about whether they would go through with something like that, yes.

QUESTION: So what is the latest? How long ago, how many days has it been that you raised it?

MS. HARF: Well, we raise it consistently with the French. The Secretary has spoken again today to French Foreign Minister Fabius. I don't have a full readout of that call, but needless to say, I think it's been raised recently.

QUESTION: And is it that the U.S. wants to just cancel that transaction, or just not to ship it until they start behaving properly?

MS. HARF: I don't think we think it's appropriate to provide that kind of material to the Russians at this time. I'm not sure what form that would look like, but we just don't think they should do it. However they don't do it, they shouldn't do it.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS. HARF: Ukraine. Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: In your statement last night, Marie, at 9:58, you congratulated the European Union's Foreign Affairs Council, and you said, quote, "Today the Council agreed to accelerate preparation of additional sanctions."

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: But no new additional sanctions were taken. Was that really a disappointment to the West, to the United States?

MS. HARF: Well, they talked about a number of additional things they could do. No, I mean, I put out a statement saying quite positive things and I don't have much more to add beyond that.

QUESTION: But wouldn't you like to see additional sanctions taken against Russia as punishment for their support of the separatists?

MS. HARF: We've certainly said we will continue to take increased steps. We have taken additional sanctions and we'll work with our partners so other people will also do so.

...

QUESTION: Can I just go back to the plane investigation? Not intel, but just the plane investigation?

MS. HARF: Yeah, mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Given your suspicions, your allegations against the Russians, are you objecting or would you object to a Russian role in the investigation? I know you've been asked this before --

MS. HARF: It's -- yeah. Well, I don't think I have.

QUESTION: -- just slightly different ways.

MS. HARF: It's been a -- it's a good question. Look, the best thing the Russians could do, honestly, to help the investigation is to use their influence with the separatists to allow access, to make sure looting stops, to let the investigators get in there to make sure the remains are recovered and returned. So that's really the best thing the Russians could do to help at this point.

QUESTION: Right, but your statement just a few minutes ago saying the blame for this lies, ultimately, with President --

MS. HARF: Yeah. So use your influence with people who did it to allow access.

QUESTION: No, no, no – lies with President Putin.

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: I'm just wondering, I mean, is it appropriate, in your --

MS. HARF: To be a part of the official investigation?

QUESTION: For them to – for Russian aviation experts to be involved in this, or is that – do you think that that's just --

MS. HARF: Well, I'm not sure there's a reason for them to be. As I just said --

QUESTION: Well, there are – they are part of ICAO.

MS. HARF: Right, but ICAO is not running the investigation. The Dutch are.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: And the United States is a part of the investigation because it was a U.S.-manufactured aircraft. There are certain ways countries become parts of investigations.

QUESTION: All right.

MS. HARF: The UK is with the black boxes --

QUESTION: Well if you're right, it was a Russian missile that took it down. So there's a Russian aspect to it too, if you're right.

MS. HARF: Look, the best thing they could do and what we would encourage them to do to help is to push the separatists to allow access.

QUESTION: So you don't --

MS. HARF: I don't have much --

QUESTION: I'm trying to figure out if you're taking a position one way or the other on this, because it --

MS. HARF: I'm really not taking much more of a position on this. I don't want to get into hypothetically what that might look like.

QUESTION: Well, I mean, they – because they've offered to be a part of it, and you might think that that's --

MS. HARF: As I said, what they can do is help allow access.

QUESTION: And that's it? They shouldn't do any --

MS. HARF: That's all I'm saying today. I don't have anything else for you.

QUESTION: All right. Well, could you find out if there is an Administration position on what are they --

MS. HARF: I certainly have spoken to people about this. I just don't have anything more for you on this.

QUESTION: Can I just --

MS. HARF: So I'm happy to have those conversations --

QUESTION: Wait, you mean you'll tell someone else, but not me?

MS. HARF: I don't have anything more for the briefing room on this issue.

QUESTION: Oh, okay. All right.

QUESTION: Can -- I just want to follow up on something --

MS. HARF: It was the royal "you." (Laughter.)

QUESTION: The royal "you"? That's a new one. Is that a sheep? (Laughter.) A-ha.

QUESTION: Absolutely (inaudible).

QUESTION: It's a female sheep with a crown.

MS. HARF: How was I gone for 20 days without you guys? (Laughter.) I can't -- it is -- I -- the depths of my missing you guys.

QUESTION: That one came out of the -- that was a fireball.

MS. HARF: Out of nowhere. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Give us your phone number, we will call you.

MS. HARF: Okay, let's do a few more and wrap it up.

QUESTION: I just want to ask about -- I'm sorry, I stepped out. Were you asked about the downing of two --

MS. HARF: I was. I was. I said we couldn't – yeah. It's in the transcript, but I said can't confirm it. We're looking into it. Obviously, they've up until this point downed about a dozen planes, and this coming on the heels of the downing of a civilian aircraft would be particularly – I don't know, abhorrent. I don't know what word I used earlier.

QUESTION: And then on – more about sheep?

QUESTION: No, not about sheep.

MS. HARF: Stare at each other down here.

QUESTION: No, no, about plane going down, but if you're still on Ukraine – I just wanted to know if you had any reaction, but it can wait until the Taiwan accident.

QUESTION: Nigeria?

MS. HARF: Okay.

QUESTION: There have been an increased spate of these attacks from Boko Haram, and I was wondering – and they seem to be taking over large areas of Borno area.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: What has happened to the U.S.-Nigerian cooperation to kind of rein in this group?

MS. HARF: Yeah. It's ongoing, and we still remain committed to helping the Government of Nigeria address this threat. We do believe that reports are accurate, I think, from several days ago, that Boko Haram militants captured the town of Damboa in Borno State and killed, I think, 100 civilians in the process. So look, we strongly condemn this incident – any incidents like this. And we're trying to help the Nigerians, but it is a tough fight here.

QUESTION: On the Taiwan crash, any --

MS. HARF: I don't have anything on that. Let me see if I can get --

QUESTION: No, I – well, not – I mean, in terms of – well, can I put the question out there --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- that in terms of potential U.S. citizens who were – might have been on the --

MS. HARF: I have zero for you on that. Let me check.

QUESTION: Thank you.

July 22, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Yes. Okay, so the White House said today that it would lay out intel regarding the Malaysian airliner.

MS. HARF: Yes. I told you guys just to stick with us and we'd get you some more intel.

QUESTION: All right. So who – do you have any information on when that's supposed to be released?

MS. HARF: So I would refer you to the intelligence community, who will today be further declassifying information and will be putting out additional information that supports what we have said; that we believe the most likely outcome here was that this was an SA-11 originated from Russian-separatist controlled areas. I'd refer you to them for details on that.

QUESTION: Okay, but you don't know --

MS. HARF: But it will be coming out today.

QUESTION: But you don't know what time, you have (inaudible)?

MS. HARF: I don't have those details, I'm sorry.

QUESTION: Okay. Also, Russia has recently been questioning a Ukrainian Su-25 fighter jet that was flying no more than three miles away from the Boeing plane before it was shot down. And they've sort of suggested that it may have been involved. They don't know, but they're questioning it.

MS. HARF: I think they've done more than suggest that, yes.

QUESTION: What evidence does the U.S. have to rule out that as a possibility at this point? Because I've heard reports that the U.S. already sort of knocked that out of --

MS. HARF: A couple points. First, as we've said, when you look at the kind of markings on the plane and how it looked like it was brought down, obviously that's consistent with an SA-11, which is fired from the ground. I haven't seen any information that indicates a Ukrainian jet. We're still looking into it, obviously. The president of Ukraine has said there was not, but again, we like to independently verify things for Matt, before you ask the question. And so I haven't seen information that would indicate that.

And all of the – the preponderance of the information that we've laid out and that the intelligence community will lay out was that this was an SA-11 fired from the ground from a separatist-controlled area.

QUESTION: And there are also several reports that the Ukrainian military has continued to issue attacks in eastern Ukraine, despite everything going on with the investigation. What kind of information do you have on that, and has the U.S. said anything whatsoever to Kyiv authorities about a cease-fire?

MS. HARF: Well, the president of Ukraine is committed to a 40 kilometer cease-fire around the crash site, and I believe the fighting is outside of that 40 kilometers. I think he's held to it. And look, we – a cease-fire takes two sides. So where there are attacks against the Ukrainian people, Ukrainian forces, they obviously have a responsibility and obligation to protect their people. But it's my understanding that they have held the cease-fire around the crash site.

QUESTION: And just one more question.

MS. HARF: Yep.

QUESTION: Is the U.S. concerned about that fighting continuing amidst the investigation?

MS. HARF: Well, we're concerned about all of the fighting in eastern Ukraine, which is the result of these pro-Russian separatists, who we've seen what they're capable of doing – not just this week but over many weeks, including when they've bragged about shooting down planes in the past. So we've called on President Putin very directly to use his influence to help end the fighting there.

QUESTION: So President Putin --

QUESTION: Excuse me, I would like to ask you about --

QUESTION: -- President Putin said today --

MS. HARF: Can we do – let's just do one at a time.

QUESTION: -- that he would --

MS. HARF: Let's do Matt, and then we'll go to you, and then I'll go to Wesley.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: -- that he would use that influence.

MS. HARF: Let's see some actions backed up – backing up those words.

QUESTION: And the other thing is, I would hope that you're not just verifying these things for me, for my sake.

MS. HARF: Matt, I just care very deeply about answering your questions thoroughly and fulsomely. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Fulsomely, yes. Okay, in --

MS. HARF: No, but I did say yesterday that we are committed and I didn't just say it to say it. We do mean it.

QUESTION: I understand that. So can you give us any idea -- recognizing that the intel community is going to do this and not you -- can you give us an idea of what it is that they're going to --

MS. HARF: I can't.

QUESTION: -- I mean, just broad -- okay.

MS. HARF: Obviously, we've spoken about our assessment, and I think we'll have some more information that backs that up.

QUESTION: The Europeans today met -- the European Council met --

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: -- and said that they were going to expand and enhance --

MS. HARF: I think visa bans, asset freezes.

QUESTION: Correct.

MS. HARF: Yep.

QUESTION: That's correct. I presume that you think that's a good thing?

MS. HARF: We do. Yes.

QUESTION: You do? Do you have anything more to say about it --

MS. HARF: I don't.

QUESTION: -- than just that?

MS. HARF: I don't.

QUESTION: Just that it's a good thing?

QUESTION: Do you feel they could go further though? I mean, there's some reluctance – I think there's some Europeans that want to go towards a tier 3, to expand it onto different sectors --

MS. HARF: Right.

QUESTION: -- and also an arms embargo which would perhaps put the French in a difficult position. And there's some who don't – notably the French. So do you think – would you support the EU to go further in these sanctions?

MS. HARF: Well, I think we would support anyone who wants to put increased pressure on the Russians here. As I said yesterday and as the Secretary and the President have both said, this should be a wake-up call for the Europeans, quite frankly, that they should do more. We've done more, and we'll keep working with them on it.

QUESTION: What do you make of the fact that the French, even after the downing of the plane, and – are going to go ahead with the transfer of this warship?

MS. HARF: Clearly think it's completely inappropriate.

QUESTION: Completely inappropriate?

MS. HARF: And we've told them they should not do it.

QUESTION: And why exactly? Because --

MS. HARF: I will let Foreign Minister Fabius speak for himself, which I know he is very capable of doing.

QUESTION: But have you explained to the French your – or do you understand – have the French come to the same conclusion as you did – as you have about who is responsible for this plane going down, do you know?

MS. HARF: It's my understanding, yes.

QUESTION: They have?

MS. HARF: I mean, they can speak for themselves --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: -- but I haven't heard otherwise.

QUESTION: But I mean, they haven't come back to you – when you say we think this is a really – this is a bad idea, you shouldn't go ahead with the transfer, they don't say well, we don't – they don't tell you that we're – they're not certain that the Russians are --

MS. HARF: I haven't heard that, Matt.

QUESTION: So what --

MS. HARF: I haven't heard anyone except for the Russians question what happened here, quite frankly.

QUESTION: Okay. Going back to the stuff that the Russian defense ministry put out yesterday and some of this stuff online, is it your – I'm presuming you have seen – I'm assuming that you've seen some of it now.

MS. HARF: Seen some of it.

QUESTION: Do you regard all of that as complete fabrication and --

MS. HARF: Well, I haven't seen all of it, but certainly the narrative that they are propagating, we very strongly disagree with and have many, many, many pieces of evidence to prove otherwise.

QUESTION: And those pieces of evidence you expect to be presented --

MS. HARF: At this intelligence community briefing, my former colleagues.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: I told you we would try.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, we will all wait with bated breath for that.

MS. HARF: I'm sure you will.

QUESTION: Just on the EU sanctions. There was a suggestion that if they did go ahead with an arms embargo they could make it for new contracts, not existing contracts. Would that be something that the United States would support?

MS. HARF: I don't know --

QUESTION: Which would allow the Mistral to still go ahead, obviously.

MS. HARF: I don't know. We obviously don't think the Mistral should go ahead. I can check on what our position is on that.

QUESTION: Marie --

MS. HARF: We don't think anyone should be providing arms to Russia.

QUESTION: Excuse me.

QUESTION: Was that discussion --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- with the Russian -- with the French, was that in the last few days? Was there a renewed discussion?

MS. HARF: We've certainly spoken to the French foreign minister over the past few days. I can check and see if it came up. I'm guessing it did.

QUESTION: And then I want to ask about the evidence that the intel community is going to release. Is that going to be expanded -- anything that's -- is that going to be more than what we've seen or heard?

MS. HARF: I think if there wasn't, I'm not sure why they would be doing it. But yes.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: You can hold me to that tomorrow if no. But I think that they will be -- we have -- there's going to be further declassification. We will be putting out more information later. Again, it bolsters and backs up the general assessment we've already put out there, but they will be putting more information out there.

...

QUESTION: Just with regard to the intelligence you're going to be releasing later today, the Administration, a member of the Russian defense ministry's advisory council came out earlier today basically with statements -- a statement discrediting what you guys are saying. And one of the arguments he made is that the satellite that you have above Ukraine can only register missile launches within a zone of 50 to 100 kilometers, and so that there's no way with any specificity the U.S. can say that the missile came from rebel-controlled territory. Could you respond to that?

MS. HARF: I think for more details, I think the intelligence community can probably respond. I, suffice to say, strongly disagree with what he said. We've seen a history throughout this conflict of the Russian Government putting out just sheer propaganda, falsehoods about what's happening. We have a great deal of open-source evidence and intelligence to back it up that supports what we believe to be true, and we'll talk about that more in the coming days.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Ukraine? Ukraine?

MS. HARF: Ukraine.

QUESTION: Can you tell us anything about the remains of the passengers that were turned in to -- did --

MS. HARF: Yes. We are pleased that the victims' remains have finally started their journey back to their loved ones. They -- let me see if I can get the details about this specifically, if you just give me one second.

This was part of the agreement that the Malaysian authorities reached with the separatist leader to do three things: move the bodies by train to Kharkiv where they will be handed over to a Dutch representative; hand over the black boxes to a Malaysian team; and guarantee safe access to the crash site for investigators to begin their work. And thus far, all three of these things have happened. The bodies have been moved, black boxes have been delivered to the Malaysians, and monitors had much-improved access today. We are hopeful that that access will continue.

The OSCE did confirm that a contingent of Dutch, Malaysian, and OSCE representatives accompanied the remains on a train to Kharkiv where they will go on to the Netherlands. I can't confirm yet if the flight to the Netherlands has happened. The train arrived in Kharkiv around 4:30 a.m. Washington time.

QUESTION: It's a morbid task, but can you give us a figure? All the passengers, 298 have --

MS. HARF: I don't have that. I mean, we know 298 people were on the plane. I don't have specifics beyond --

QUESTION: Do you have any information -- there was some suggestion that the Ukrainian separatists have said that there were 282 bodies that were handed over, and in fact it seems that the people who have received them said there were only 200 bodies. Do you have any --

MS. HARF: I can check. I don't have -- I -- that's a good question. Let me check with our colleagues there.

QUESTION: There have been some reports that the wreckage of the plane was badly tampered with, including one report that said the cockpit had -- well, the remains of the cockpit had actually been sawed in half. Do you have -- do you know about this?

MS. HARF: I can't confirm that. I've obviously seen the reports that -- and we saw just video and photos of the pro-Russian separatists tampering with the evidence in a fairly grotesque way. I can see if I can confirm the issue about the cockpit.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, I'm just wondering, in general, if such tampering -- does that -- and the fact that the Secretary said the scene was already seriously compromised --

MS. HART: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I mean, are you concerned at all that the investigation will not be able to reach a conclusive --

MS. HART: No. I think we are concerned about what happened at the crash site, but we do believe that the investigation can go forward and can make a judgment about what happened here.

QUESTION: One more --

QUESTION: A correct and factual judgment, not just any judgment, right?

MS. HART: Correct.

QUESTION: Can I have one more?

MS. HART: Wait. Let's go to Lucas, then I'm coming to you.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: On the Facebook page of the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, there's a map showing the SA-11 surface-to-air missile trajectory as well as the flight path of the aircraft.

MS. HART: Yeah.

QUESTION: Did this image originate from the State Department?

MS. HART: It's commercial imagery that's available commercially.

QUESTION: And was that --

MS. HART: And I know we posted it on our Facebook page in the Embassy, but it is commercial imagery.

QUESTION: So commercial imagery. And did somebody at the State Department or from the Embassy put in the flight tracks, the lines?

MS. HART: I don't think anyone here did. I think that this is something we've been using internally inside the broader USG who's been talking about this, but let me see if I can get you some more details on that.

QUESTION: Okay, because that --

MS. HART: And flight paths are obviously publicly available information, so --

QUESTION: Right. But the track of the missile --

MS. HARF: Yeah. It's a good question, Lucas, and let me check on that.

Yes. On Ukraine?

QUESTION: Yes, madam. This is one of the unique kind of incident, what terrible incident has taken place. Many people are asking now: What is the future -- are you calling any kind of some kind of international aviation conference? How can you avoid in the future such incidents? Because this is not -- in the past you had seen some bombs and all kind of those things, but not the way it happened now.

MS. HARF: Well, in terms of international response, as you saw yesterday, the Security Council unanimously passed a resolution about this incident, and we welcomed that resolution. It talked about a number of things, including the investigation here. And as you saw too, we are very -- take very seriously, the United States Government writ large through the FAA, our obligations to protect American citizens and to warn U.S. carriers when we think there could be a possible security risk. I don't have, I think, more details for you about what comes next. But I think the President was clear yesterday that these incidents need to have accountability, and that's what the investigation is going to do -- that people -- what we need to find out right now is who was on the ground with the pro-Russian separatists, who exactly was there at the launch site for the SA-11. That's part of what the investigation will do so we can hold people accountable.

...

QUESTION: Do you have any information that would corroborate this, what this Ukrainian official in Kyiv is saying that a Russian -- is that what he just asked -- or that a Russian officer actually pushed the button?

MS. HARF: I don't think he just asked that. I haven't seen any. Obviously, one of the things we're trying to figure out right now -- and this is the hardest thing -- who was at the site. So we're still trying to figure that out right now.

QUESTION: Who was at the site and who actually did whatever it is that is required to launch it.

MS. HARF: Correct, yes.

July 21, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/ Russia/Turkey
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: I'm wondering, first, if you have any reaction to the Malaysian prime minister's announcement that they have gotten a deal with the rebels to turn over the black boxes and to – and the train has apparently – with the bodies has apparently left. Is this a positive sign in your --

MS. HARF: Well, if true – obviously, we think that there should be a full investigation, full access to the site. We can't confirm independently these reports, but if true would be a step in the right direction. I would say this in no way legitimizes this person who has claimed leadership over this area, but we need access and his people control the area, so obviously this would be a step in the right direction. But we can't at this point independently confirm either of the things you asked about.

QUESTION: Okay. And then you are perhaps familiar with the briefing that the Russian defense ministry gave this morning in which they laid out satellite images or radar tracking images talking about a Ukrainian fighter plane that was apparently near this – the Malaysian airlines plane. They also asked questions, a series of questions to you – meaning the U.S. Government – to produce the documentation, the evidence that Secretary Kerry, Ambassador Power talked about but didn't offer any forensic evidence, or at least intel evidence. How do you respond to that?

MS. HARF: Well, a couple points. You saw the Secretary yesterday speak very clearly about our assessment that this was an SA-11 fired from Russian-backed, separatist-controlled territory; that we know – we saw in social media afterwards, we saw videos, we saw photos of the pro-Russian separatists bragging about shooting down an aircraft that then they then – they then – they then – excuse me – took down once it became clear that it may have been a passenger airline.

There is a preponderance of evidence at this point both sort of out there in the public domain and also from our information that points to the fact that there was a SA-11 launched from separatist-controlled territory. We assess, of course, that the Russian-backed separatists have this system, and one of the main reasons we have called for a full investigation is so we can get all the facts out there.

So what I encourage the Russians to do at this point is to push the separatists that are backed by their government to allow access, to allow investigators who are in Ukraine waiting to go into that area right now, and that's what I would call on Russia to do at this point.

QUESTION: Right. But what they're saying is that you should – they've put their – what they have out on the table, or at least they say they have done that.

MS. HARF: Well, I haven't seen any of that. Again, we've made an assessment based on a broad range of information. We know this was fired from Russian-controlled territory. It is our assessment, very strong assessment this was an SA-11 that we know the Russian-backed separatists have. We, again, continue to gather more information and call --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: -- on Russia to push the separatists to allow for a full investigation.

QUESTION: How is it exactly that you know that it was fired from Russian -- I mean, from separatist-held territory?

MS. HARF: Well, we have a great deal of information that the Secretary laid out yesterday, and I can go back through some of it today. But we do know first that Russian-backed separatists were in possession of an SA-11 system as early as Monday, July 14th. This is from intercepts of separatist communications posted on YouTube by the Ukrainian Government.

QUESTION: Well, is there anything -- okay, is there anything other -- because there's other --

MS. HARF: I can keep going if -- or you want to jump in.

QUESTION: Well, is there stuff that's other than social media that you're talking --

MS. HARF: Yes, absolutely. There is.

QUESTION: Okay. So what is it that's other than social media?

MS. HARF: At this point, Matt, we've said what our assessment is, very strong assessment publicly. If there's more information that that's based on that we can share, we're happy to do so. We'll continue looking at that. But look, this is what we know as of right now. Based on open information which is basically common sense, right -- we know where it was fired from, we know who has this weapon -- backed up --

QUESTION: Well, I don't --

MS. HARF: -- backed up --

QUESTION: -- I mean, it's disputed, though.

MS. HARF: -- backed up by a host of information that we have gathered about who did this, where it came from, and what the weapon system was. So one of -- we're just telling you what we know now.

QUESTION: Right, right. But --

MS. HARF: One of the reasons we've called on Russia to push the separatists it backs into an investigation is so we can get all the facts. Instead of holding press briefings and making statements, maybe the Russian Government should call on the separatists they support to allow an actual investigation.

QUESTION: Right. But that's what you've done. You've held press – well, Security Council meetings and going --

MS. HARF: Well, we don't have leverage with the separatists. I would say the Russians do and they're not using it. So let's have them use it.

QUESTION: Well, okay. But I mean, I think we're talking at cross-purposes here. I'm asking you --

MS. HARF: It wouldn't be the first time.

QUESTION: (Laughter.) No, that's true. What I'm asking – I mean, there are social – all you're willing to present publicly that backs up your version of the story, which may well be the correct version of the story, but all you have --

MS. HARF: "May well be."

QUESTION: Well, it may well be. But I don't know because I haven't seen your evidence that shows that the missile was launched from rebel-held territory. But you're saying – so the only thing you're willing to put out publicly is the social media accounts, I mean the social media stuff.

MS. HARF: That's part of it.

QUESTION: Right. But there are social media accounts that says – that disputes that or that claims to present a different version. So are you saying --

MS. HARF: What would that version be, Matt?

QUESTION: Well, I don't – there are many, many theories.

MS. HARF: Any --

QUESTION: But you're saying that all of those accounts --

MS. HARF: Most of which are completely illogical, I would point out.

QUESTION: Well, but all of the accounts that do not support your version of events are wrong -
-

MS. HARF: No.

QUESTION: -- and all of the ones that do support it are right? Is that what you're saying?

MS. HARF: Look, we make assessments based on a variety of intelligence and a variety of information, some of which we can talk about publicly and some of which we can't.

QUESTION: Well, is the -- are you --

MS. HARF: And we also -- and look, if you just take a step back, right, we need there to be an investigation so we can get all the facts, period. But on top of that, we have public information, which is, of course, the easiest for us to talk about --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: -- of the separatists bragging about having the system, bragging about the attack that took place, and then walking back from it when it became known that it was a passenger jet. I would ask people who don't believe our assessment to say, "Okay, what other possible explanation could be -- could there be for that?" They defy logic, right?

QUESTION: Well, I don't know if it defies logic or not, but --

MS. HARF: So when you start from a place of you have separatists out on -- again, this is the easiest piece of information for us to talk about -- online bragging about it, start there and then work from there and work from all of the evidence we have that we are confident we know where it was fired from, we're confident we know what it was, and it points in a certain direction. Again, we would encourage Russia to support an investigation if they don't believe the facts.

QUESTION: Right. It points in a certain direction, but I'm not sure it would stand up to an international --

MS. HARF: I strongly disagree. I absolutely believe that it would.

QUESTION: -- investigation. Well, are you willing, if not at this moment in time now but soon, to put forward the intel that you say backs the claims that were made on social media? And in particular, it seems to me that the Secretary was very definitive, as you were just now, at saying that you know for sure 100 percent --

MS. HARF: I didn't say 100 percent. Nothing is 100 percent in any world, Matt. But go ahead. It is our assessment, very strong assessment.

QUESTION: Okay, very strong assessment that the rocket -- that the missile was fired from the rebel-held territory.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And I mean, you can't – there is no social media that I'm aware of that would lead to --

MS. HARF: Well, at the time that MH17 flight dropped out of contact, we detected a surface-to-air --

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. HARF: -- missile launch from a separatist-controlled area in southeastern Ukraine.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. HARF: Which we believe was an SA-11. What you want is the intelligence that underlies that?

QUESTION: Yeah. Well, I mean, they – the Russians have challenged – I'm not – I'm just saying the Russians have said --

MS. HARF: I'm just trying to clarify the question.

QUESTION: -- have said we've shown – we've put out our radar images which show this Ukrainian plane near at least – well, they have. I mean --

MS. HARF: Right.

QUESTION: Why don't you put out your --

MS. HARF: Well, unfortunately, I don't have original declassification authority, Matt. But --

QUESTION: Okay. Is --

MS. HARF: Wait, let me finish. But look, we have endeavored to make public as much information as possible. Obviously, if you're dealing with an intelligence assessment in part, we are sometimes limited in what information we can share. That's why I think you saw the Secretary speak much more forward-leaning about why we believe this and how we believe it.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: Sometimes you can't get into all the specifics. We endeavor to put as many out as possible. We're continuing to see if we can do more.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: I will say that.

QUESTION: So okay --

MS. HARF: Yes, we are --

QUESTION: So there is a possibility --

MS. HARF: I can't promise you anything, but we're continuing to see.

QUESTION: There is --

MS. HARF: And I would also say that the Russian Government has a long history during this conflict of misinformation and propaganda that they've put out, so I would take anything they say about this with a very large grain of salt.

QUESTION: Well, okay. But I mean, the problem -- are you committing now to at least doing -- that the intel community is doing its best to declassify stuff that they can put out and at least end the conflicting claims put forward by both the U.S. --

MS. HARF: Well, I would say that the Administration in general is attempting to put out as much information as we can about what underlies our assessment. I would also say that these aren't competing narratives from two equally credible sources here. The Russian Government has repeatedly put out misinformation and propaganda throughout this conflict in Ukraine, so I would caution you from saying that this is just two equally credible sources.

QUESTION: Well, all right.

MS. HARF: Although you're happy to report it that way.

QUESTION: No, I just --

MS. HARF: But I would take issue with it.

QUESTION: Well, I mean, again, you might be right, but I don't see how you can say that everything we say is right and everything the Russians say is a lie.

MS. HARF: That's not what I said.

QUESTION: That's exactly what you just said right now.

MS. HARF: That's not what I said. I said I would say that we are not two credible -- equally credible parties when it comes to what we say publicly about the conflict in Ukraine.

QUESTION: And your argument would be that the U.S. is more credible than the Russians are, right? Is that what you're --

MS. HARF: I'm not even dignifying that question with a response.

QUESTION: Well, I mean --

QUESTION: Marie, did you see the --

QUESTION: But you're leaving that impression, Marie.

MS. HARF: That we're more credible? Yes. We don't put out mass amounts of propaganda. We don't put out misinformation about what's happening there repeatedly over the course of this conflict, which I've spoken about from this podium day after day. Absolutely.

QUESTION: But can you tell us --

QUESTION: The problem with that is is that all of 2002 and the beginning of 2003 was propaganda and misleading information that was put out by the United States.

MS. HARF: Okay, Matt. I'm sure that's a tempting historical analogy to make, but it in no way impacts at all how we are doing this assessment or what we're doing.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: And maybe someday you'll finally stop using that as a straw man all the time.

QUESTION: It's a --

QUESTION: Well Marie, one of the big things is showing evidence.

MS. HARF: Yeah. I -- agreed. Agreed.

QUESTION: I mean, in court or anywhere, and I think that's what Matt's saying, is show the evidence, independent evidence of what you got in intel. I mean, the Russians --

MS. HARF: So we --

QUESTION: -- said today that they did not deliver any SA -- you've seen it -- bulk missile system. I mean, is there evidence that you have seen -- not what the Ukrainians or anything online has shown, but it's something that the U.S. has got evidence that they -- that the Russians supplied this to them?

MS. HARF: This specific system.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. HARF: So a few points. And again, I agree that evidence is important and we are attempting to put out there as much as possible. I do think that's why you saw the Secretary and me today going much further in why we say we believe -- why we believe what we say. And I

know it's frustrating. Believe me, we try to get as much out there as possible. And for some reason, sometimes we can't.

Look, I think it still remains to be seen, right, how the pro-Russian separatists got whatever – the SA-11, the specific one – I'm not assigning culpability there. But we know that there have been legions of young men crossing the Russian border with very sophisticated weaponry. This would not happen without at least the acquiescence or the support of the Russian Government.

These are complicated systems, right, that it takes training on. We know that the Russian Government's been training the pro-Russian separatists. We know, period, that what's happening in eastern Ukraine would not be happening without the support of the Russian Government. So we need a full investigation to determine exactly where the SA-11 came from, but we know that the pro-Russian separatists have many of the weapons they have, have the training they have, and have the support they have because of the Russian Government.

QUESTION: They could have stolen it from the Ukrainian --

QUESTION: Does the U.S. – does the – did the U.S. actually have – independently noticed that a Ukrainian warplane was the in the vicinity of the Malaysia --

MS. HARF: I don't know if I can confirm those reports. I'm happy – I don't even know if that's true. I'm happy to check on it.

Yes.

QUESTION: Could they have stolen it from the Ukrainian military? I mean, the Ukrainian military has the same system, correct?

MS. HARF: Again, as I just said, I think we – we're still – part of the reason we want to do an investigation is to determine the origins of the SA-11 system that we believe was used here. But regardless, it was fired from pro-Russian separatist area. We know that these pro-Russian separatists have shot down planes throughout this conflict – other planes, Ukrainian military planes – they've bragged about it online – with a – using a variety of systems. So this fits into a certain pattern we've seen here, but I would underscore this is why we need an investigation that's not impeded, where there's full access – you heard the President speak about it this morning, and that's the best way to get all of the facts, is for there to be an investigation.

QUESTION: Is the fact that the Malaysian Government – if it's true, they cut that deal with the separatists – does that in any way sort of elevate the separatists into a sort of legitimate status, and what --

MS. HARF: Well, as I just made clear, it does not give them any legitimacy --

QUESTION: I understand. I --

MS. HARF: -- but they control the area and we want -- our biggest concern at this moment is for the loved ones of those lost on that plane to be able to have their loved ones return home with dignity. It's insulting that the separatists are not allowing them to do so.

QUESTION: And the other part of that **QUESTION:** Do you think that the Malaysian Government in a way did not coordinate with you and the other international parties by doing that on their own so to speak?

MS. HARF: Said, I don't have any analysis of that to do. As I said, this doesn't in any way confer legitimacy on the so-called leader there. But it is the truth that his fighters do control the territory, and our biggest concern right now is getting the remains of those lost on the plane, and allowing access for an investigation.

Yes, James.

QUESTION: Marie, I wanted to follow-up on various aspects of this, and begging the indulgence of my colleagues for the various strands I want to pursue with you.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm. Okay.

QUESTION: But first just to follow up on this notion of the disclosure potentially of some of our intelligence information or product by way of satisfying the world's questions about this affair. Perhaps the more apt analogy than 2002-2003 is Adlai Stevenson at the UN where we had a very serious charge that the Soviet Union at that time had installed missiles on Cuba, and we shared our photographic reconnaissance by way of making that point.

Is that the kind of thing you say the Administration's considering doing here to satisfy the world's questions about this?

MS. HARF: I would actually compare it to a more recent event, which is when we talked about the chemical weapons use in Syria. That's something I lived through, so I know more acutely than Adlai Stevenson's activities at the UN. But on that, there were a lot of questions, and we attempted to, as the days went on, make more information available until we got to a point where we basically put out an intelligence assessment, not -- we didn't put out every piece of information, but we were able to get as much out there. That's what we're trying to do right now. Obviously, it's always a balance.

QUESTION: Some sort of white paper, as we saw in the Syrian conflict?

MS. HARF: I have no idea what that would look like, but we're trying to put as much information out as possible.

QUESTION: The reason I ask this is because Secretary Kerry himself seemed to me to be rather forward-leaning in his discussion publicly of intelligence product --

MS. HARF: Absolutely.

QUESTION: -- in a way that was inconsistent with the repeated statements we get from podiums like this that we cannot discuss sources and methods. So, for example, he stated, "We ourselves tracked the imagery of the launch of this surface-to-air missile. We have the trajectory recorded. We have the intercepts of their conversations. We know this from voice identification. We have a video."

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: It seems to me that, having displayed so much of that information across the country on various channels yesterday, the Administration should be quite prepared to back that up.

MS. HARF: It's in no way inconsistent, James. I think the balance we always try to strike is when we can put as much information out publicly without threat to sources and methods. Many times we can't. That's not just something we say because it's fun to say. Having worked in the intelligence community, it is a fact. But in cases like this, in cases like Syria's chemical weapons, we endeavor to put as much out as possible when we can do so. And that's why I was making the point that he was quite forward-leaning yesterday, because we believe it's important.

QUESTION: A couple of very quick other things --

QUESTION: Can I just have one very briefly, because I want --

QUESTION: There's no such thing with you, Matt. Come on.

QUESTION: Yeah, no, there -- this time there is.

So is that --

MS. HARF: I agree with your colleague, by the way.

QUESTION: Is all -- really? Ganging up, huh? (Laughter.)

I just want to make sure -- so you're saying that the information that the Secretary -- that James just went through -- the imagery, all that kind -- that this is stuff that you're going to provide to the investigators?

MS. HARF: I did not say that, Matt.

QUESTION: Oh.

MS. HARF: I said that we endeavor to make as much public as we can.

QUESTION: But whether or not it's made public, you will give them to the investigation team, right?

MS. HARF: Well, the Dutch is leading the investigation. We're obviously a part of it, as are other countries as well. I don't have anything to preview for what we'll provide to them, but we've said we'll cooperate as much as we can.

QUESTION: Sorry.

QUESTION: Secretary Kerry stated during his round of interviews yesterday, in particular with Fox News, "It's been seriously compromised," speaking of the investigation. The Secretary's a former prosecutor.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: As a former prosecutor, it seems to me he should know that when he says a given investigation has been "seriously compromised," that the faith that the world may have in the final product of this investigation is also going to be seriously compromised.

MS. HARF: Well, James, I would take it a step further, and I would say at this point, because of the lack of access, we are very concerned. But that doesn't mean that there's not a future for this investigation; that if investigators are allowed in today, tomorrow, in the coming days with full, unfettered access, they can do an investigation. Look, there's a lot of technical expertise out there in terms of investigating plane crashes. And he was very clear, though, that we are outraged about the lack of access here. Not just us, but every country around the world, particularly those who lost people in this plane crash. So look, we are very committed to this investigation. We are providing some FBI and NTSB officials to help with it and are willing to help in any way we can.

QUESTION: Two more things, and then I will yield to my colleagues. When he was asked by NBC News about our dealings with the Russian Federation, Secretary Kerry said – and specific to President Putin, "It's a question of whether or not you're going to get the cooperation necessary." And he adds, "We're trying for the last time to see if that will be forthcoming at this moment or not." What did the Secretary mean by "the last time"? "We're trying for the last time." Is that an indication that if the kind of cooperation the U.S. wants to see from Russia is not forthcoming at this moment, that we will cease our engagement with the Russians in some way?

MS. HARF: Well, I think you heard the President speak this morning very clearly, that responsibility – direct responsibility – for cooperation with the investigation by the pro-Russian separatists lies with President Putin. He was very clear about that. We have also said, James, that if they do not de-escalate here, that if they don't take steps – you heard the President again say this morning – there will be further consequences.

We have also said, at the same time, that there are times we work with the Russians. I was just in Vienna for a few weeks where we sat on the same side of the table with the Russians, on the same page on the Iran nuclear issue.

QUESTION: But what is, "We're trying for the last time to see"? What is that --

MS. HARF: I don't think I have anything more to parse of his words, James. What he was conveying is that this --

QUESTION: To ask the meaning of the words is not parsing them. He said --

MS. HARF: I'm telling you the meaning of what he said --

QUESTION: -- "We're trying for the last time."

MS. HARF: I am telling you how the Secretary views our relationship with Russia.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: Okay? He views it -- again, in this -- when we're talking about Ukraine, you heard the Secretary or you heard the President very clearly say they have a direct responsibility to push their backed separatists to work with the investigation; that if they do not, if they do not de-escalate, there will be further consequences. I don't think the Secretary was meaning to convey anything beyond what we have said for months and months publicly.

QUESTION: Last thing. To your point, when he was asked by ABC News if these -- this set of events is going to make the Europeans likelier to back stiffer sanctions on the Russian Federation, the Secretary's reply was "We hope Europe will be." So that produces the question of whether or not the horrific nature of this set of events hasn't catalyzed a single one of our European partners to tell us that, in fact, they are ready for stiffer sanctions.

MS. HARF: Well, we're in discussions with them all the time. As you know, there's a Foreign Affairs Council meeting, I believe tomorrow, of the European Union. And look, we think and hope that this should be a wakeup call for the Europeans, particularly in terms of imposing additional costs on Russia. We certainly hope it will be. We've been clear that we will continue to take additional steps.

QUESTION: And lastly, Reuters reported today, and I'm quoting now: "The expected handover of the bodies and the black boxes, and reports by international investigators of improved access to the wreckage" weakened a new case for broader sanctions against Russia laid out by Western leaders. Would you say that that's false?

MS. HARF: I didn't see that quote, but I think what is clear here is you have a situation where there is a crash site in an area controlled by separatists back by Russia. And Russia needs to use its leverage over these separatists to provide access.

QUESTION: Does this newfound set of steps that looks like cooperation -- does that weaken the case for stiffer sanctions?

MS. HARF: I can't confirm that any of those steps are actually happening. I've seen the reports, but I think we need to see many more actions on the ground.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.

MS. HARF: Yep.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) talked repeatedly about responsibility, that Russia has ultimate responsibility. If indeed it is proved that the separatists did shoot down MH17, how are they to be held accountable? Is there supposed to be a trial? Does their leader go on trial? Do the people who fired the missile go on trial? If the ultimate responsibility lies with Moscow, how is that government held accountable? What's – what is the U.S. and the international community looking for here specifically?

MS. HARF: Well, I don't have anything specific to preview for you. I think – I don't want to get ahead of the facts, and what we're focused on right now is getting all of the facts.

QUESTION: Would this be a criminal case?

MS. HARF: Again, I don't want to get into specifics here. I know we're looking into a variety of options in conjunction with our partners, but nothing specific to outline today.

QUESTION: Is – are families being told that they should perhaps back away from any sort of civil litigation until they figure out exactly why this plane fell out of the sky and who was behind it?

MS. HARF: I don't have details on what the communications with the families are like. I just don't have those details.

QUESTION: Is there a role for the Security Council (inaudible)?

MS. HARF: Well, today at 3:00 p.m. the Security Council will be meeting to consider a resolution – let me just pull up this information – expanding on its call on Friday for a full, thorough, and independent international investigation in accordance with the international civil aviation guidelines, for appropriate accountability, and for full and unrestricted access to the crash site. This is a resolution we fully support. Obviously, we think these tenets included in it are very important. That's happening at three today.

QUESTION: Is --

QUESTION: Are you pretty sure that it will pass, that no one will veto it?

MS. HARF: I don't want to make a prediction, Matt, on what might happen at three. I think we'll all be watching it. Of course, we hope that everybody supports it, but we will wait and see.

QUESTION: What would you say – and I realize this is a hypothetical, but since you're so strongly in favor of it, if there was a veto, what do you think that would show?

MS. HARF: Well, I think what we've said – well, first, it depends on who vetoes it.

QUESTION: I think you know who I might be referring to.

MS. HARF: Well, I don't ever want to presume to understand what you're asking – (laughter). No, but being – look --

QUESTION: Then how can you possibly answer any of my questions if you don't know what I'm asking?

MS. HARF: What we've said is – look, what we've said is Russia has said words publicly about supporting this investigation, and we need to see actions now to back up those words.

QUESTION: Right. Well --

MS. HARF: And obviously that would not be an action that would be supportive of the investigation.

QUESTION: Fair enough. The German foreign minister, the Secretary's friend and colleague, Foreign Minister Steinmeier said earlier this – today that anyone who is trying to obstruct the investigation into this crash either has something to hide or has no heart or both. Is that something that you would agree with?

MS. HARF: I would certainly agree with those sentiments, yes.

QUESTION: Okay, so in other words --

MS. HARF: Absolutely.

QUESTION: -- if someone does veto it, they're either heartless or they're hiding something or both?

MS. HARF: Well, we – I would have to see what the reasons behind that veto were, but in general, yes. Look, this is – you heard the President speak this morning, I think, about this in a way that made clear that these are people who want their loved ones back. I mean, this is disgusting and insulting that they would cut off access to a crash site like this, and we need to see that stopped.

Yes, Lucas.

QUESTION: I just had a quick follow-up. A short time ago, Ukraine President Poroshenko called for both the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic to be added to the international terror list. Would the State Department support that, and is there any plans for the State Department itself to add these two entities to terror watch lists?

MS. HARF: I haven't seen that. Obviously, we don't talk about the processes of how we determine whether or not someone would be on it. I haven't just seen those reports. I'm happy to check with our team.

QUESTION: But would you support their addition to the watch lists?

MS. HARF: Again, we don't talk about our deliberations about whether or not groups or people are added to these kinds of terror lists. We've been very clear, regardless of what we call it that what they're doing in these areas is completely unacceptable and against international law.

QUESTION: Would you be against their inclusion on an international watch list?

MS. HARF: I know you're trying to ask it five different ways, and I'm not going to answer in any of those ways, that we don't talk about those kind of deliberations.

QUESTION: And just --

QUESTION: While you were away, however, Marie, they were added – both – to the sanctions list.

MS. HARF: Thank you for keeping me up to speed, Matt.

QUESTION: And just one quick one.

MS. HARF: This is a group effort today.

QUESTION: How much evidence do you need to blame Russia for this action?

MS. HARF: Well look, we want to be very clear about the facts before you make statements, which is why I think when you see the Secretary go out and be as clear as he was yesterday, that should be a signal to people. So we're still trying to get the facts here. And it's true that it's not possible for the separatists to function the way they are without support from Russia, without the training, without the sophisticated weaponry. So we need to get all the facts about this specific incident, but we know that the pro-Russian separatists could not function the way they're functioning without the support from Russia.

QUESTION: So you are blaming Russia.

MS. HARF: I certainly am blaming the Russians for the pro-Russian separatists' behavior in general, but we need to get all the facts about this specific incident. We don't – I don't want to go out there and put culpability on anyone until we have all of those facts. That's why, if Russia has nothing to hide, they should push their separatists to allow access.

QUESTION: Can we go to Gaza?

MS. HARF: Anything else on this?

QUESTION: I want to ask about Putin.

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: Today I believe that Assistant Secretary Burns is meeting on the Australian.

MS. HARF: I believe they had a phone call. I can check if there was meetings as well.

QUESTION: Oh, okay. Is there --

MS. HARF: I can check. I know the schedule's been a little in flux with the Secretary's travel.

QUESTION: Okay. Is there any kind of effort to maybe push Russia or bar Russia from participating in the G20?

MS. HARF: I don't know. I can check. I haven't heard of any, but let me check.

Yes. On this still?

QUESTION: Yes. There's been reports of a new offensive in Ukraine in the Donetsk region this morning. Are you concerned that this new fighting is going to undermine efforts to get access for the international observers to the site?

MS. HARF: No. The president of Ukraine has called for a 40-kilometer cease-fire, which he has committed to around the crash site. The fighting is outside of that 40 kilometers. It's actually about double, 70 to 80 kilometers away, so we are not concerned about that.

Anything else on this? Yes.

QUESTION: I was wondering if there is a point when the crash site becomes too tainted in order for investigators to become useless, essentially.

MS. HARF: I mean, look, every day that goes by that we don't have access it becomes more challenging, but we do believe there is a credible -- a full investigation that can still be done. That's why we need access immediately for the investigators, the team that's led by the Dutch. And look, I think we can always get information. We want every piece of information we can get. That's why we need the investigators there.

QUESTION: Is there any information in terms of the bodies that have been moved that is coming into the State Department?

MS. HARF: So we're seeing reports that they've started to be moved. Obviously, it's very important to us -- I can't confirm those independently -- that the bodies be repatriated to their families, as you heard the President speak about this morning, as soon as possible. The way this

has been handled up until this point by the separatists has just been horrific. And again, that needs to change (inaudible).

QUESTION: And finally, in terms of the black boxes --

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: -- have you heard any information about where they might be, who might have control of them, and who might ultimately become in possession of them?

MS. HARF: Yeah, let me see. I think I have something about that. Let me see if I have it right here.

I don't think we have full fidelity at this point. Yes, we have seen the various reports, but do not have a definitive answer on if they've been found or where they are. We have called on both the separatists and on Russia to turn over any investigative information, of course, including the black boxes, to the investigators.

...

QUESTION: Actually, two. According to Israeli press, during the phone conversation between the Prime Minister Netanyahu and Secretary Kerry, Prime Minister Netanyahu complained about Turkish prime minister rhetoric over Gaza.

MS. HARF: I'm happy to check. I don't know the answer to that for you, and I probably wouldn't discuss it even if I did, given we don't discuss private conversations. But I'm happy to check.

July 18, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/ Russia
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: The President said there was at least one American. Was this person traveling with a U.S. passport? Is it – and I believe there's still three unidentified. Is it possible that any of those three are American citizens?

MS. PSAKI: Yes. Let me give you an overview that I think will answer some of – all of those questions and maybe a few more. On Thursday, Malaysia Airlines notified us that no passengers boarded Malaysia Airlines flight 17 using a U.S. passport. Knowing this information, we immediately then took additional steps to verify whether any of the passengers were also U.S. citizens. And the process that we underwent was to individually check each name against our passport records, and there isn't – there wasn't, in this case, biographical data available either, so obviously that takes some time to check. And we, of course, need to ensure that we can be confident in our results before we notify family members.

So the President spoke to one individual, who is a dual national. There are also – I believe the number, unless there's been a change, are – there are four individuals that Malaysia Airlines has not identified the nationalities for. So certainly, we also don't know the nationalities of those individuals. We're also – while we've gone through the manifest, because there isn't biographical data available we're continuing to do our due diligence to match any available data up to ensure there aren't additional dual nationals in the manifest.

QUESTION: Well, so you've gone through all of the names.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: And the only one that popped up as holding a U.S. passport or being a U.S. citizen is --

MS. PSAKI: There were no individuals holding U.S. passports who boarded the plane.

QUESTION: Okay. So this one guy --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- this one victim who the President named was a dual citizen but did not have a U.S. passport?

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: Did not possess one?

MS. PSAKI: Well, not – didn't – I'm not sure if they possessed one, but they did not have one that they boarded the plane with. I suppose they did not possess one.

QUESTION: Well, wouldn't – all right. Then I'm confused. If you check all the names against your passport data --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- wouldn't it show up if he had one, whether or not he had used it to get on the plane or not?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, I would remind you obviously there are also a dual – sometimes there are names that are common names that we need to check.

QUESTION: Well, but let's just talk about this one guy.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, mm-hmm.

QUESTION: He did or did not possess – whether or not he used it or not to get on the plane, did or did not possess a U.S. passport?

MS. PSAKI: Well, he is a dual citizen. What passports he possessed, I would have to check if that's how we determined.

QUESTION: So the State Department doesn't know if this guy had a – possessed a U.S. passport?

MS. PSAKI: Clearly, we know that he was a U.S. – a dual citizen. I don't have any other additional information. I assume that's how we knew.

QUESTION: Does that mean that if you typed in "Jennifer Psaki" into the passport records, it would not pop up that you have a passport?

MS. PSAKI: I am a U.S. citizen.

QUESTION: You have a passport.

MS. PSAKI: I would board a plane with a U.S. passport.

QUESTION: But not all U.S. citizens have U.S. – anyways, we're probably getting bogged down.

MS. PSAKI: That is correct.

QUESTION: Anyway, so none of the other – including the four, or three, or whatever it is that are not yet identified by nationality by Malaysian Airlines, you – none of those people are U.S. citizens; is that what you're saying?

MS. PSAKI: At this point in time, we're still doing a review given there isn't biographical data available for a number of individuals, so we're doing due diligence to ensure before we make that confirmation.

QUESTION: But you can't say for sure that none of the 200 – none of the total number of people on the plane actually held a U.S. passport?

MS. PSAKI: None of them boarded the plane --

QUESTION: I know that.

MS. PSAKI: -- with a U.S. passport.

QUESTION: Maybe I'm getting bogged down into something that's really -- I just don't understand why you can't tell -- you can't go in and look at a name and see if that person has a passport.

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to double-check that for you, Matt.

QUESTION: All right. Anyway --

MS. PSAKI: I'm providing the information we have available, which is the one individual and the process we're undergoing.

QUESTION: Are you aware of any discussions between -- from this building and Russia or Ukraine over the course of the last 20 -- 18 hours or so between Secretary Kerry or other senior officials?

MS. PSAKI: Secretary Kerry has not made calls --

QUESTION: Assistant Secretary Nuland?

MS. PSAKI: -- to Russian or Ukrainian authorities. I would remind you that we have a large -- or a number of senior officials who have been in touch with Ukrainian and Russian authorities, certainly both on the ground, but also you've seen the calls read out by the White House.

QUESTION: I'm hoping this isn't something going on and --

QUESTION: This reflects dissembling (inaudible).

QUESTION: Exactly.

QUESTION: Very sensitive issue.

QUESTION: I think it reflects the state of chaos --

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: -- state of chaos in the world.

MS. PSAKI: I'm sure we can turn that off if that's possible. Is that possible? Okay. Great. Does that help decrease the distraction?

QUESTION: There we go. Look at that. All the world's problems are fixed.

MS. PSAKI: All right. (Laughter.) All right. Have a good weekend. (Laughter.) Good to see all of you. Just kidding.

QUESTION: So there have been contacts, but just not at the Secretary's level or a senior level?

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: Okay. Are there any plans for there to be such contacts or any plans for the Secretary to potentially travel to deal with this situation? The reason I ask is that Ambassador Power at the UN this morning made some pretty powerful, strong --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- accusations, allegations against the Russians.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And I'm just wondering if anyone thinks -- if the Administration believes that it would be worthwhile to pursue these with Russian officials or whether you've decided that it's more appropriate to wait until an investigation is finished.

MS. PSAKI: Well, our focus right now is on seeing through a full, credible, thorough investigation. I can give you an update on the resources that the United States has sent -- made available for that. In terms of travel, there's no current plans for the Secretary to travel to the region. As you know, he always has a bag packed, and if that is a decision made that that would be productive, I'm sure he'd be happy to do that. You're right. Ambassador Power -- and then again, the President -- repeated a number of items of evidence and data that is available about what is happening on the ground. They both reaffirmed the fact that we're not going to prejudge the investigation. We want to see that move forward, and that is where we are at this point in time.

With that being said -- let me just finish, and then we'll go. With that being said, we certainly understand that -- and our focus is, as the President said and as the White House statement said

last night, is of course continuing to call for a reduction in tensions and a de-escalation. And aside from the investigation, if there's a need to play a role in that, the Secretary or anyone in the Administration is certainly ready and willing to do just that.

Can I just give you an update on the staff that are – the individuals who are going? So we have offered – the Government of Ukraine, as many of you may have seen, has issued invitations to assist with an investigation to ICAO, NTSB, Boeing, Malaysia, the Netherlands, and the European Civil Aviation Conference. We have offered assistance to the Ukrainian Government, including personnel and resources from the NTSB and the FBI, which the Ukrainians have accepted. The NTSB will be sending at least one investigator to the Ukraine. The timing of this is still being determined, and our response will, of course, be guided by events as they unfold, and our understanding is at this point the FBI is preparing to deploy at least one FBI individual personnel member to Ukraine. It's also not clear on the timing of that. Of course, it remains a fluid situation, and we, of course, will be responsive to their needs moving forward.

QUESTION: And then last one from me, at least I hope it is. You referred to Ambassador Power's comments to the Security Council. You said that she presented items, evidence and data. What – maybe I was watching a different Security Council meeting. I mean, she certainly made some strong accusations, but I don't think she presented any evidence to back them up or any data to – that would back up the claim, her claims. Is – one, is there such items, evidence and data that you have? And two, are you willing to make it public? Because clearly there are people on the Russian side who don't buy this.

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, what I was referring to – and I'm sorry you disagree with my terms I used to describe it, but – was the information that's available, the context of what has been happening on the ground, which is what she outlined. Obviously, she stated – as the President stated – we're going to see the investigation through. We want that to be a credible international investigation, and there isn't a separate process that we're undergoing from the United States.

QUESTION: So – but – so you're saying that you are not willing to make the evidence and data that you have public – you'll give that to the investigators, but you won't make it public to --

MS. PSAKI: What I'm referring to is exactly what she stated publicly, which is the presence of certain systems along the border, which is the fact that – and many of them are public reports. She was outlining information about what has been happening on the ground, which I think is important for context. But we'll see the investigation see itself through.

QUESTION: Well, but she was pretty – she said that “we assess that” – and that's clearly a finding by the intelligence community, because they're the ones who use that language --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- “we assess that it was fired” – this missile was fired --

MS. PSAKI: Sorry, your thing – yes.

QUESTION: -- an SA-11 was fired -- where is the data? Where is the evidence that backs that up?

MS. PSAKI: There isn't additional data that we are providing publicly at this point. I'm -- it is likely we will use -- we will provide that through the investigation process.

QUESTION: So -- all right. But do you understand how there are people who are skeptical of what she said, especially given previous UN Security Council presentations by Americans? I mean, I just -- if you're pretty convinced about it, would -- could you -- I would appeal to you to ask to make some of this information public. I'm not necessarily doubting any of it, but --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- when you say that she presented evidence and data, she really didn't. She presented --

MS. PSAKI: What --

QUESTION: -- the overall assessment from --

MS. PSAKI: The overall assessment and facts of what we've been seeing on the ground.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: That may be the more accurate way of describing it.

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: James.

QUESTION: Thank you, Jen. I have a number of areas related to this that I'd like to pursue --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- and with the indulgence of my colleagues. First, there's been a lot of discussion of a credible international investigation that the United States, through various spokespeople, has said that it would like to see pursued here. Under what auspices does the United States wish to see an international investigation pursued?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Ukraine -- this happened in the territory of Ukraine, so they clearly would have the lead on this process. As I mentioned, there are a range of countries they've asked for assistance from that have agreed to provide and participate in any investigation. We've also seen on the ground a number of international organizations already engage. And these reports just came out, so I'm not sure if you saw them, but the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission went to the site of the crash today. They're obviously playing a role here as well. They had only limited

access and left after 75 minutes. Of course, calling the need for unfettered access is incredibly important in our view.

QUESTION: So in calling for there to be an international investigation, is the United States also calling for the final report or product of this investigation also to be international in character?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the engagement of a range of countries and organizations, I think, in our view makes it an international process. But of course, Ukraine would have the lead in the investigation.

QUESTION: And the final say in the outcome of the investigation as – in terms of ascriptions of culpability and so forth.

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, there'll be participation and expertise provided by a range of countries and organizations. You've seen a broad level of interest, and the Ukrainians themselves have requested the assistance from a range of international organizations and countries as well.

QUESTION: I guess I'm making a distinction between the investigation and potential prosecutions that might flow therefrom.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And I'm – I guess I'm asking if your desire to see an international investigation is mirrored by a desire to see the prosecution – any potential prosecutions also retain some kind of international flavor or character.

MS. PSAKI: Well, James, it's a good question. I think we're not quite there yet in the process.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: One of the reason – let me just finish – that we sent a – we're sending an FBI – an individual from the FBI, if not more over time, is because of the special expertise they have in criminal investigations. So we'll see where we get to in the process.

QUESTION: When the announcement went out last night that Secretary Kerry had canceled his appearance at the Sixth and I Synagogue here in Washington, the press release stated that he was doing so so that he could engage in internal discussions with staff and discussions with his counterparts around the world. You've just told us that those counterparts did not include anyone from Russia or Ukraine, and so I'm wondering if you can give us a readout of his calls to date --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- on this subject. And I guess perhaps later when we do Gaza, you could reserve that for that segment of the briefing or --

MS. PSAKI: Well, if you don't mind, let me just – because I think it gives a flavor of what he was working on last night. There were, of course, a range of discussions that he and senior members of the Administration were in last night through the interagency. So that was part of what his time was spent on.

QUESTION: What are you talking about there exactly? Is – was there an NS principals meeting or an NSC? What were --

MS. PSAKI: No. But again there are a range of ways to engage, and certainly on the phone and discussions about how to address – as you know, there were a number of statements put out pretty late in the evening last night, so there was an effort to work on those as well through the process.

Last night – or yesterday, I should say, and today – he has spoken with Quartet rep Tony Blair, with the Malaysian foreign minister, Dutch foreign minister, Qatari foreign minister, the Arab League secretary general. He spoke last night with the Egyptian foreign minister twice – sorry, once last night, once yesterday – with French Foreign Minister Fabius, with Prime Minister Netanyahu. We – you saw the – I'm sorry – readout we put out last night with Foreign Minister Davutoglu and with the UAE foreign minister.

So he was engaged and there were times when he was back and forth and spoke with some of them multiple times last evening.

QUESTION: Okay. To proceed to some of the specific points of contention today --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: First, the Ukrainian security services released what they claimed were transcripts of the intercepts involving Russian military intelligence officials --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- purportedly directly discussing this attack. Does the United States Government have any assessment as to the authenticity of those recordings?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any assessment to offer at this time. There's obviously an investigation. We'll let it see itself through.

QUESTION: You don't – do you have cause to doubt the authenticity?

MS. PSAKI: I really don't have any analysis of it to provide.

QUESTION: Secondly, the Russian defense ministry disclosed that it has intercepted the activity of a Ukrainian radar system on the very day when this attack occurred, and the defense ministry stated, and I quote, the launch of rockets could have also occurred from any of the batteries deployed in the populated area of Avdiivka, which is eight kilometers north of Donetsk,

or from Gruzsko-Zoryanskoe, which is 25 kilometers east of Donetsk. Does the United States have any assessment of this disclosure by the Russian defense ministry of radar intercepts and suggestions of alternative scenarios to what Ambassador Power suggested?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think one of the points Ambassador Power made was that while the Ukrainians do have SA-11 systems in their inventory, we're not aware of Ukrainian – any Ukrainian SAM systems in the area of the shoot-down. Obviously, that's a contextual example and that's why we need to see the investigation see itself through, but obviously relevant information.

QUESTION: Is that assessment, which Ambassador Power included in her remarks, take into account what the Russian defense ministry is saying here about these other installations that could have been the origin point for this missile?

MS. PSAKI: I think she was stating what we're aware of at this time. And obviously these events are only – just over 24 hours old, so that's why we're going to focus on seeing the investigation through.

QUESTION: Last question, you've all been very patient with me --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

QUESTION: -- and I appreciate it.

So the President kept using a phrase in his remarks today: "We have confidence in saying." And as you know, that's kind of a term of art. This confidence that the United States has that the origin point for this missile was rebel-held Ukrainian territory – is that high confidence?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm going to leave it where the President of the United States stated it, James, no surprise. And again, there is a range of information, as you noted in your question, we have available that we don't always speak about publicly, and I believe that was what he was referring to.

QUESTION: He later called it "increasing confidence." So he qualified it at one point.

And just to follow up on what Matt said, when we have the President saying we feel confident in saying something, and then we have the UN ambassador saying "we assess" – doesn't that strike you as there being some kind of important semantic difference there?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think it was meant to be a difference. Those statements were very coordinated and were similar in the language that was used.

QUESTION: Because the last thing she said: "We assess Malaysian airlines Flight 17 carrying these 298 from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was likely downed by a surface-to-air missile, an SA-11, operated from a separatist-held location in eastern Ukraine." Is – the word "likely" appears in there. Is the word "likely" which occurs right before "downed by a surface-to-air

missile,” is she saying that it’s the missile that was likely or she’s saying that it’s the rebel-held territory that’s the likely part of this?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we have some information available about what happened. Obviously, we know – we’re confident in what and where. The questions we really have are who and why, and I think that’s what the investigation will really be exploring.

QUESTION: So we know the “where,” is what you’re telling us?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have – you heard the UN ambassador. You heard the President also speak to that. And I think --

QUESTION: Because the President said we don’t have a definite judgment on that, but you seem to be rather definitive on it, saying we know the where.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have a good sense, as the ambassador to the UN said. So again, we’re going to see the investigation through. As we have more information, we’ll provide that information.

QUESTION: So it’s not a slam dunk?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I’m not sure what that means, but go ahead.

QUESTION: A couple of questions. Jen, is there any doubt about who those four individuals who have not been identified yet might have been doing on the plane, or is that sort of – there’s no suspicion about who they were, or it’s just that they haven’t been identified?

MS. PSAKI: Not that I’m aware of at all, Kim. I think it’s just that information about their identities.

QUESTION: And then going back to the point of the international – about the international investigation, it’s an interesting point. Under whose auspices – apart from the fact that it was – that it happened on Ukrainian territory, surely the Russians might be in a position to contest the results of any investigation if they feel they’re not part of it or if it’s not UN-led. I mean, how are you going to make sure the results of this investigation aren’t contested by the Russians, for example?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don’t know that we can ensure that, of course, but again, I think it’s only natural that because this took place in Ukrainian territory that they would have the lead on the investigation. And that’s a pretty standard procedure. But they have welcomed and invited in a range of countries, a range of international outlets with expertise, and clearly, that’s an indication of their openness to an international investigation.

QUESTION: Would you want the Russians involved?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not in a position to make a decision on that. Of course, we don't have the – we're not in the lead on the investigation.

QUESTION: Jen.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

QUESTION: Can I just follow up on the list of calls that you listed --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- that the Secretary made today? There wasn't a call, unless I missed something, with Foreign Minister Lavrov.

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: I realize the presidents spoke yesterday --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- but is there a reason why he's not trying to reach out to his Russian foreign counterpart? Isn't this something that – obviously, that the two diplomats of the two countries should be talking about?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's nothing other than there's a great deal of focus at a very senior level in the Administration on this issue right now. The President of the United States spoke with President Putin just yesterday. He spoke with the president of Ukraine just yesterday. And I'm certain, if there's a need, that Secretary Kerry would be more than happy to speak with Foreign Minister Lavrov, and we'll see what happens over the coming days.

QUESTION: Because Ambassador Power's statement basically laid it squarely at the door of Russia, as did the President in saying that the equipment had come from the Russians. I mean, it would seem that at this point, you need to be having some kind of discussions with your Russian counterparts.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we are in discussions with Russia, and we have a large embassy there. We have a great deal of engagement with Russians. The question of whether the Secretary will make a call – that certainly is possible in the coming days. I'm just not going to predict given I don't have those plans yet in front of me.

QUESTION: Were you able to get an answer to the question that I asked yesterday about these missiles? Let's say the SA-11, which is what the – what Ambassador Power said was likely used to shoot this plane down, is that among the materiel that the Russians sent into Ukraine according to your information?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I believe that the reports that have been out there have referred to Buk missiles. Those are – while we've expressed concern about surface-to-air missiles in general, we have not specified those in that level of detail. We just don't have information we can share on that particular missile system.

QUESTION: Well, but when you, Marie, and other officials were talking about missiles along with tanks going from Russia into Ukraine to supply the separatists, did they – did those missiles include SA-11s?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think we have specified to that level of detail, Matt.

QUESTION: So you don't know as --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not saying we don't know.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: I'm saying I don't have any more information to share.

QUESTION: Well, but do you – you don't – so you don't have any information to share with us about whether you even know for sure that SA-11s were in --

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any more information to share --

QUESTION: -- in the (inaudible)?

MS. PSAKI: -- on the types of surface-to-air missiles that we have seen in the hands of Russian separatists.

QUESTION: Well, okay. Could I appeal to you to – I mean, if – because if this isn't among the arsenal that you say was moved --

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would remind you too, Matt, that aside from that, one of the points that Ambassador Power made this morning was that there was an SA-11 system reported by a Western reporter, and separatists were spotted hours before the incident with an SA-11 system.

QUESTION: Yeah, I understand that. But I'm just wanting to know if you believe that SA-11s were among the things that were sent in over the course of the past month or two months into --

MS. PSAKI: I've – if there's more information to share publicly about specific weapon systems, we can make that available; I'm not sure that there is.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: So I mean, I know you're still trying to determine exactly what happened, but it sounds like, just to put a fine point on it, regardless of whether it came from the Russian side of

the border or it came from one of the separatists, that you feel that Russia has a responsibility here, whether they gave them the weapon, they had operatives that helped them do it, or they just gave them the weapon and an instruction manual and said go ahead.

MS. PSAKI: That's not at all what we said or what the President said or what the UN ambassador said, Elise. They laid out specific details of the events we've seen happening on the ground. All of that is important context. But we're not going to prejudge the outcome of the investigation.

Certainly, aside from this specific tragic event, we have concerns about a range of the steps that they outlined, including providing access to weapons systems, providing materials to the separatists, but we're going to see the investigation through before we make a judgment.

QUESTION: Do you think that this will in any way will change President Putin's calculus in terms of his support for the separatists or for his kind of bid to destabilize Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it certainly should. This, as the President said this morning, was a wakeup call to the world, to many European countries, and certainly should be to Russia as well that given all of these events, this is of great concern and it's something that we think, certainly, that President Putin and the Russians should take a close look at.

QUESTION: And do you think that this will harden European kind of resolve in terms of the severity of the measures that you've been considering?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we can't make a full prediction of that for obvious reasons, but certainly seeing the horrific events that happened yesterday, seeing the families who are mourning their loved ones, all of the information that's available should be a wakeup call to everybody.

QUESTION: Are you going to push the Europeans to be – to take a tougher line on Russia now?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, again, we're going to see this investigation through. But we've been engaged in discussions with the Europeans about sanctions for months now, as you all know. We'll see how this proceeds, but those will continue regardless.

QUESTION: Jen, after the President – after Ambassador Power's comments and after the President's comments, but in particular Ambassador Power's comments, how can you say that we're not going to prejudge the outcome of this investigation? I mean --

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt --

QUESTION: -- she outlined what you assess, your – the conclusions of your looking into this so far, and basically – not basically, did blame the Russians for it; said it came from a – not a specific area, but a rebel-held area; that it was a specific kind of missile that was used. It seems to me that that's prejudging, or you've done your own investigation and those are the results of it.

MS. PSAKI: We have --

QUESTION: But you seem to want to have it both ways.

MS. PSAKI: -- not done our own investigation.

QUESTION: You make your -- you make these allegations.

MS. PSAKI: We're participating in the international investigation.

QUESTION: I understand.

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish. There's a range of information, most of which is publicly available, that Ambassador Power laid out in her remarks this morning. That's all relevant context.

QUESTION: Sure.

MS. PSAKI: But again, there's an official process that will be seen through.

QUESTION: Well, it's not public information that an SA-11 -- that the U.S. assesses that an --

MS. PSAKI: I said a vast majority.

QUESTION: -- right -- SA-11 was responsible, and that it was fired from rebel-held territory. That's not -- that's something that --

MS. PSAKI: I said the vast majority of information.

QUESTION: I understand that, but in coming -- but in presenting those conclusions or those assessments, that seems to me, unless you've done your own investigation already, that you -- that there has been a pre-judgment of what happened here.

MS. PSAKI: That was not the intention --

QUESTION: All right.

MS. PSAKI: -- and I'd point you to where she stated in her remarks -- I don't have it exactly in front of me -- a reference to the fact that there will be an investigation.

QUESTION: All right. But then she closed out her remarks -- near the end she said, "This war must end. Russia can end this war. Russia must end this war." How is that not a prejudgment of the situation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think there's a concern here outside of this --

QUESTION: Or is she talking about more broadly?

MS. PSAKI: Correct. There is an ongoing concern about the escalation, and certainly outside of this investigation, we have remaining concerns about the steps of Russia and their – the materials they've provided to separatists.

QUESTION: But wait a minute. But you're --

QUESTION: And then – just let – I actually have one – this is extremely brief. You don't regard what she said and what the President – what Ambassador Power said and what the President said as prejudging the outcome of the investigation?

MS. PSAKI: Correct, we do not.

QUESTION: But why, then, are you tying this incident, then, to everything of the – if you don't know and you aren't kind of prejudging that – I know you're not prejudging the exact details, but it seems as if you are prejudging that these events are a direct result of the conflict in Ukraine, of which you've said that Russia is the main instigator here.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I don't actually think that's what they said at all. I think outside of this, there's no way, given this event happened in Ukraine, given there's accusations being tied back and forth – I can assure you CNN and every other outlet has been tying this to the events happening on the ground, and of course we look at that context. And we look at the concern about rising escalation; we look at – that's why we called for a return to a discussion about a ceasefire. So certainly, the context of what's happened over the last several months, given the accusations back and forth, is incredibly relevant here.

QUESTION: No, I understand. But if you say that you don't believe that the Ukrainians have this type of missile and you say it came from eastern Ukraine, which would indicate that – and you say that you believe that the separatists were responsible, and you're blaming Russia for its support for the separatists, wouldn't that logically point to Russia as having some type of culpability here?

MS. PSAKI: Again, when there's a conclusion of the investigation we'll have more to say about what culpability is and what it means and what the implications will be.

QUESTION: Can we go to Gaza?

QUESTION: I was told that the Russian ambassador to the UN said today that Ukraine should have closed its airspace. Do you have some comment on that?

MS. PSAKI: I have not seen those particular comments. You may have seen – I mentioned yesterday a step the FAA took a couple of months ago. And you may have all seen this, but the FAA, after considering the recent event, has determined that an increase in the area covered by our prohibition is necessary. So therefore, the FAA has issued a notice to airmen to prohibit all U.S. flight operations within two flight information regions in eastern Ukraine. That was, obviously, a recent step that's been taken since the events of yesterday.

QUESTION: But I mean, it sort of suggested that the fault lies with Ukraine.

MS. PSAKI: Well certainly, this area, aside from Crimea, which there was a – there was an aviation regulation in place since April on, this has been open flight area. So I think we would disagree with that notion.

QUESTION: Sorry, did you say that happened since yesterday?

MS. PSAKI: Correct --

QUESTION: The FAA has --

MS. PSAKI: -- given the events, mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you.

QUESTION: So in addition to what was – Ambassador Churkin also said that – raised the question of why Ukraine air traffic controllers would've routed this jet over an area that was a conflict zone. Do you have any response or reaction to that kind of question being raised?

MS. PSAKI: I think it's important to remind everyone that this action was taken in an area – the area was – the conflict there was caused by the intervention and the engagement of Russian separatists supported by Russians. And otherwise, there are certain regulations that the FAA and other flight organizations put into place, but there wasn't one over this particular area of eastern Ukraine.

QUESTION: So you think that it's irrelevant? That question that he posed is pretty much irrelevant.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's not – it doesn't speak – there are – now, it's important to note that a number of operators over time have chosen to voluntarily alter their routes beyond just the restriction in the Crimean Peninsula. But it's not – it wasn't a requirement or a regulation in place.

QUESTION: No. But I mean, his question – his raising the question, why did the Ukrainian air traffic control route the plane over this area, you don't think that that's particularly relevant to the investigation?

MS. PSAKI: No. It was open airspace.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: So it was – there were planes flying over it.

QUESTION: All right. And then President Putin in his comments last night, and again Ambassador Churkin at the UN – and I also believe Foreign Minister Lavrov – all say that this would not have happened if it hadn't been for the Ukrainian Government resuming its military operation in the east. Is that – what's your reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's important, again, to remember that the entire conflict in eastern Ukraine is due to the illegal intervention of Russian-backed separatists, the support of Russia with military equipment and other materials. That's where the conflict came from. They went into a sovereign country, and that's why we're here. There's no other reason.

QUESTION: Okay. So that just – you do not accept that?

MS. PSAKI: Correct, yes.

...

QUESTION: Thank you. A wake-up call to the world; this terrible incident, Madam, has shaken up the entire aviation industry. And also within half an hour of this incident, Air India, carrying 126 passengers, went through luckily and landed safely in Delhi. And prime minister of India, coming from Brazil to Germany to Delhi, also about to come within one hour, but he – they would change their route.

What I'm asking you is that as far as these kind of weapons are concerned, you think other terrorists also may have – including in Afghanistan and Pakistan? And then what is the future and how can you stop them not to carry all these weapons? Because this is a first-of-its-kind incident.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm trying to follow what exactly your question is, but let me try. So there's an investigation that's ongoing with international support about this specific incident. I would caution anybody about broadening that into what it means and to other countries. Obviously, there are steps that the FAA here has taken. Other national or international civil aviation outlets may take similar steps, but we'll leave that to them to determine.

QUESTION: What kind of investigation can be done if – right, they only allowed them to stay for 75 minutes, the first group that went in? I mean, it's over a huge amount of territory.

MS. PSAKI: You're right, and that's why we're very concerned. And those who say they are going to participate in or welcome this investigation need to give unfettered access, and obviously, we didn't see that when these individuals were there for 75 minutes.

...

QUESTION: Does the United States Government have any information as to the whereabouts of the black box and in whose custody it presently resides?

MS. PSAKI: There have been a range of reports about those being in the hands of Russian-backed separatists. I don't believe we have any independent confirmation of the location.

QUESTION: And is it fair to say, just to follow up on Elise's line of questioning earlier, that when the President tells us we still await definitive judgment on the origin point and likely culpability for this attack, is it fair to say that the United States, given the case that Ambassador Power laid out, has at least reached a preliminary conclusion about those matters?

MS. PSAKI: I think there's a range of information that's publicly available. As is the case with serious incidents like this, we'll let the official conclusion be made. But obviously, Ambassador Power wouldn't have said that if there wasn't a reasonable belief that that was accurate information.

QUESTION: Don't you see a sort of possible conflict of interest that people might see when the eventual report comes out of how this happened? The U.S. Government, given Samantha Power's statements at the UN, is then – the U.S. Government is then sending the FBI to also be a part of this investigation, this report. Couldn't it be difficult for the results of this report to stick if we're already hearing sort of a line from the U.S. Government that they believe it's Russia's fault, then they are – the government is indirectly involved in this investigation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's not exactly --

QUESTION: There are a range of other nations that have many --

MS. PSAKI: Let me answer your question. That's not exactly what either the President or Ambassador Power said. They also both made clear that there's an investigation we're going to see through. The FBI participation – the FBI clearly has a range of important expertise in criminal investigations. I think that's expertise that could – we don't know – could come in handy in this case. That's what they will be offering. So there'll be a range of expertise and entities that will participate in this investigation.

QUESTION: So I have one more on something that Ambassador Power said, and that was she said that we cannot rule out the possibility that Russia – there was some kind of Russian technical assistance to the --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Why not? Why can't you rule that out? And is she referring to the tapes that the Ukrainians have presented that James referred to earlier? Is that what makes this a question?

MS. PSAKI: She's referring to the technical complexity of the SA-11 and the unlikelihood that the Russian-backed separatists could effectively operate that kind of assistance without assistance – the kind of – systems, sorry, without assistance from knowledgeable individuals.

QUESTION: But could not those knowledgeable officials be former Soviet soldiers who happen to be Ukrainians who happen to have joined the separatists?

MS. PSAKI: She said “rule out.” We can’t rule out.

QUESTION: Okay. But I mean, that – so she’s not intending to make the accusation that there was – that the U.S. believes there was Russian assistance in operating this SA-11 system. She’s saying – she’s just throwing it up there --

MS. PSAKI: She was making the point that it’s a complicated, technical system that would require expertise in that system.

QUESTION: Kind of like Churkin questioning whether – why Ukrainian air traffic control routed the plane over --

MS. PSAKI: I would hardly compare the two --

QUESTION: No? Okay.

MS. PSAKI: -- given it was open airspace.

QUESTION: So – I’m sorry, though.

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead, Elise.

QUESTION: I mean, it’s – I understand what you’re saying, that you’re waiting for the final results, but for a Cabinet member to go out and address the world and say we can’t rule it out, that’s pointing the finger at someone, even if you’re not 100 percent sure. And given the fact that you’re careful in all other areas so as not to say anything – I mean, clearly you didn’t want to say anything yesterday – you’re not saying with 100 percent certainty that Russia was involved, but you are pointing the finger at Russia. To say that you’re not is disingenuous, I think.

MS. PSAKI: I think we’re laying out a range of contextual facts that we’ve been concerned about for some time.

QUESTION: You’re building a case against Russia. Is that --

MS. PSAKI: No, I wouldn’t put it that way. It’s – I think it’s clear what the SA-11, which is a complicated, technical system, it’s hard to see how back – how separatists, pardon me, could do that on their own. She was making a statement of a fact. We – she said we couldn’t rule it out. She didn’t say an individual was at fault or she didn’t say it absolutely is. There are a range of facts in this case that are publicly available information or information that we’ve assessed. She said in her own statement that there’s going to be an investigation.

QUESTION: I just think that if you weren’t reasonably sure that you felt that Russia had some capability here, you wouldn’t even be laying out a possible Russian involvement.

MS. PSAKI: Well, capability, which was laid out --

QUESTION: Culpability.

MS. PSAKI: -- is different -- culpability. I thought you said capability. Again, Elise, I would -- I think if you look at what she stated and what her remarks outlined, it was information laying out the context of what we've seen happen on the ground.

QUESTION: Can we go to Gaza?

QUESTION: I have one more follow-up.

MS. PSAKI: Can we just do a few more, and then we can go to you, Said?

QUESTION: Sure.

MS. PSAKI: Okay, go ahead.

QUESTION: Okay, I have two questions.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: First, it's about the timing. Since the U.S. has imposed sanctions to Russia, then this happened. And I will add, the recent trip of President Putin to Latin America, if you see any connection.

And the second one, I was wondering if you have any information: How could a passenger plane be mistaken for a military aircraft? Thank you.

MS. PSAKI: Well, these are all excellent questions, and this happened just 24 hours ago. So they're questions we just don't yet have definitive answers on.

QUESTION: Just one more?

QUESTION: As the Secretary makes these calls here, and you all, and the President and everyone else, is part of the message that it's about time Europe stood up to Putin and put in some real sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: As he speaks with his European counterparts?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: I think it's important to note that we have been working in lockstep with our European counterparts on announcing sanctions and rolling out additional consequences. And clearly --

QUESTION: But haven't they've been sort of – not done as much as this country would have hoped?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think, one, they have taken a number of steps that there has been an impact. There's no question that the economic impact, or the economic impact on Europe is different from the impact on the United States. We're also talking about dozens of countries that need to agree and work together. We're one country. But regardless of all of that, we have worked very closely with the Europeans. They announced a new set of sanctions just this week, and obviously, if events continue to escalate, if President Putin continues to choose escalation over de-escalation, the international community will continue to put consequences in place.

QUESTION: Just one more on the plane. Today Turkish prime minister was very definitive, and he said that this Malaysian plane was hit by Russia over Ukraine. Have you reached out to Turkish prime minister, whether he got some intel that you don't?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not aware. There hasn't been a call from here with the Turkish prime minister, so beyond that I don't have any other speculation on that. I think I've outlined where we stand.

QUESTION: I'm sorry. He spoke to the foreign minister.

MS. PSAKI: He did. And they spoke a great deal about the events in Gaza. And of course, they're all coordinating on and discussing the events that happened yesterday in Ukraine as well.

...

QUESTION: Do you consider this as an act of terrorism? If yes, then if you'd like to call the separatist side terrorist outfits?

MS. PSAKI: I think, again, we don't know the origin. Of course, any time the loss of innocent lives are – we see a loss of innocent lives, that's a horrific act. We'll see the investigation through. I'm not going to put additional labels on it beyond what the President and the – Ambassador Power –

QUESTION: (Off-mike) who did it, but the act itself. Is this an act of terrorism?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I'm not going to put additional labels on it from here.

QUESTION: Do you rule out that it could have been an accident?

MS. PSAKI: I think we're not ruling out – well, we don't feel this was an accident. We feel – I think you heard the President and Ambassador Power give very definitive remarks on this. But we're going to see the investigation through, and I will --

QUESTION: Because Vice President Biden yesterday stated this was no accident. So the Department stands by those remarks?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we – I think there have also been remarks that point to that from the President and from Ambassador Power as well.

QUESTION: Wait a second. I want to make sure that – because I think that you clouded the – muddled the waters a little bit here.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: You do not believe this was an accident. In other words, you do not believe that whoever fired this missile wasn't aiming for something else. Or to put it another way, you believe that whoever fired this missile intended to hit and take down a passenger airplane.

MS. PSAKI: I'm not – I wasn't --

QUESTION: A civilian passenger airplane.

MS. PSAKI: I wasn't stating that, Matt.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: I think I'm not going to go farther than I've gone here.

QUESTION: All right. So in other words, it may have been an accident in terms of whoever fired this thing thought that they were hitting a military target?

MS. PSAKI: Correct. Look --

QUESTION: All right. So that's --

MS. PSAKI: Again, this --

QUESTION: That's a mistake. That's an accident.

MS. PSAKI: There are a range of ways of defining it, yes. Thank you for your clarification.

QUESTION: But you're not saying that you know or you believe that this --

MS. PSAKI: We don't know --

QUESTION: -- Malaysian aircraft's Boeing 777 civilian plane was targeted by the people who fired this missile?

MS. PSAKI: We don't know more than what I've just stated and what has been stated today.

QUESTION: But when you say, quote, "we don't feel this was an accident," you are expressing a preliminary conclusion, correct?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's not my intention. I think we've been pretty clear. We're participating in the international investigation. We're going to let that conclude. There are a range of events and information that's available from what has happened on the ground recently. That's all relevant, but this happened 24 hours ago.

Kim, go ahead.

QUESTION: I'm sorry, because we're going back to square zero here. Are you saying --

MS. PSAKI: Okay. I hope not. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Because accident and mistake are two different things, and if you're saying "we don't feel that this was an accident," that means that you're saying it's still possible that this plane just came down from the sky because something went wrong with the plane.

MS. PSAKI: Well, Kim, let me just be clear here. This happened 24 hours ago. There hasn't been an investigation; that's been underway. We're participating in that process. I'm not going to prejudge it beyond that, and we're -- I don't think I'm going to have much more to add from here today on it.

QUESTION: Okay. So when you say "accident," you mean -- when you say you don't feel this was an accident, you mean that whatever the motive or whatever whoever fired this missile was shooting at, they were shooting at something, and this wasn't a malfunction of the plane. Is that what you mean by "accident"? Because I think we're getting hung up here on something. When you say "accident," you mean the engine failed or something like that in terms -- is that what you're saying?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's no evidence of that to date. I don't have anything more in terms of analyzing what exactly happened here, but obviously there's a range of contextual information from what's happening on the ground that's relevant.

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Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/ Russia
Washington, DC**

MS. PSAKI: And finally, all of you have seen and many of you have asked me about what we know about the reports of the Malaysian plane crash. We have seen the same reports you have. At this point, we do not have any confirmed information about casualties, the cause, or additional details. Our thoughts and prayers go out to those onboard, their families, and loved ones. We're closely monitoring the situation. The Secretary is, of course, aware of these reports, and we're seeking additional information. Our Embassy in Kyiv is also in close contact with the Ukrainian authorities on this incident. But at this point, those are all the details that we have.

QUESTION: Jen, so you have seen these reports apparently coming from the manifest that there were 23 U.S. citizens onboard. Even if you don't know if that's actually correct, can you say whether you have that information from the manifest that apparently there were 23 U.S. passengers aboard?

MS. PSAKI: We've seen the public reports. I spoke to our team right before I came out here. We don't have any additional details at this point on American citizens. We're looking to, of course, obtain that information. As soon as we have it available, we'll make it available to all of you.

QUESTION: And has the Secretary – we know that the President was – spoke to President Putin this morning about – not this, but the plane came up. Has the Secretary made any calls to anyone in Russia, anyone in Ukraine that you're aware of?

MS. PSAKI: Not at this point. Obviously, this just happened a couple of hours ago. We can keep you updated as well on any additional calls that he makes this afternoon.

QUESTION: Does he plan to?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any planned calls to predict for you, but if any calls happen, we can make sure those are available to all of you.

QUESTION: So the Ukrainians' foreign ministry is saying that they have reason to believe this – not just a guess, but based on their assessment – that this was a Russian-made Buk missile that is in the hands of the Russian separatists. You also have kind of chatter on Twitter about some of the separatists saying that they did shoot down a plane. Has your team on the ground spoken to the Ukrainians? Have they told you that this is your assessment – that this is their assessment and you just want to get your own confirmation? I mean, where are you at this point?

MS. PSAKI: As I mentioned, we're in touch with Ukrainian authorities on this incident.

QUESTION: So they've obviously shared this assessment with you?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not – I don't have further readouts, but I think it's a safe assumption that we're discussing reports and, obviously, a range of comments that have been out there. We don't have our own confirmation of details. I can't predict for you if and when we will. But obviously, events are very fluid on the ground. We don't have any more information from here to share.

QUESTION: Because given the fact that it is very fluid and it's very early, I mean, there is already a kind of – some common wisdom that says, like, the separatists have done it. But just to confirm that, is this your belief and you don't have confirmation of that?

MS. PSAKI: It's --

QUESTION: I mean, do you have suspicions of that at this point?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to speculate on this, Elise, for obvious reasons. We don't have any additional details to share other than the reports you've seen about the plane crash. In terms of the causes, the individuals onboard, I have nothing else here from the U.S. Government.

QUESTION: There were some Ukrainian transport planes that were shot down, I think, in the last week, maybe in the same area. I mean, is that something that you're looking at in terms of that this could be a similar mistaken --

MS. PSAKI: I'm just not going to speculate further for obvious reasons.

QUESTION: Quite aside from the actual – what actually happened, whoever or whatever was responsible for it, is it correct that this type of missile that Elise just mentioned, the Buk missile, was among the --

QUESTION: I could have said that wrong.

QUESTION: Sorry?

QUESTION: I could have said that wrong, but I think it --

QUESTION: Well, however you pronounce it, this kind of missile was among the weaponry that you have said over the past – the course of the past couple – month or so that have been transiting from Russia, from these military facilities, sites in southeast – in western Russia, sorry – in western Russia to the separatists in Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to check that, Matt, but I'd also note that we don't have confirmation that that is the cause --

QUESTION: I know. I'm not suggesting --

MS. PSAKI: -- or the source of the plane being down.

QUESTION: I understand that. But are these missiles that the Ukrainians say were responsible for this plane, are those the types of missiles, quite apart from this incident, that you were complaining had – that the Russians had been sending into Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: I'm happy to check with our team on that information separately from this particular incident.

QUESTION: I mean, one of the things yesterday when you imposed these new sanctions on the Russians, I mean, isn't it true that one of your concerns is that the Russians have been doubling down on their – increasing, actually, their supply of weapons to the separatists?

MS. PSAKI: We have stated that publicly and still have a concern about that. But I think there's a difference between making unfounded or unconfirmed accusations from the podium --

QUESTION: I understand. But without talking about the specific Buk missile or something, has it been a concern that the Russians have been supplying them with truck-mounted or shoulder-fired missiles?

MS. PSAKI: We have expressed concern about it in the past, Elise. That hasn't changed.

QUESTION: Particularly of those type of missiles?

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to past comments we've made about them.

QUESTION: The Administration has made very clear that it blames the Russians for escalating the conflict in this area and that they've added to the tensions there. So whoever is to blame, ultimately, for this downing of the airliner, is there some source of responsibility that must be borne by Moscow for the situation as it now exists in the area?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think broadly speaking, Matt, the fact that we announced yesterday a new round of sanctions, including several defense companies, several energy companies, speaks to our level of concern about the escalatory actions that we continue to see from Russia. However, we don't have enough information with this specific incident, and that's why I'm not going to be able to provide you any confirmation of details and I don't want to speculate on who's to blame or the root causes when we don't have that information at this point.

QUESTION: When I speak of the climate, the climate of conflict that's escalated there and obviously led to this tragedy.

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, we don't know that at this point in time because we don't know what the causes are or who is responsible for the plane going down.

QUESTION: And what, if any, assistance would the Administration provide for any investigation of this incident?

MS. PSAKI: It's too early to say. And we have traditionally or historically provided a range of assistance. You're familiar with the assistance we provided when the Malaysian plane disappeared. But we can keep you all up to date on whether there's a request made and a request granted from our end.

QUESTION: Given the fact that it did – this plane did fall down in separatist territory, clearly those separatists are not equipped, capable to launch – I see that they've called – they've said that they'll try and help with an investigation. But given the fact that they clearly don't have any type of capability to launch any type of investigation – I think they might have control over the black boxes – I mean, how do you see the Ukrainians and how can you help navigate ensuring that there is an investigation?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're in close touch with Ukrainian authorities, and if there are requests made, we will keep you all abreast of whether we are providing assistance and what kind of assistance we're providing.

QUESTION: Can you confirm that any Americans were onboard?

MS. PSAKI: I can't at this point in time. And again, this just happened so recently, Lucas, but we are happy to provide all of you with that information as soon as we have any details to confirm. And obviously, we're seeking that information as we speak.

...

QUESTION: Apart from this incident, just generally speaking the situation in the east, I presume – but please tell me if I'm wrong – that you still have the same concerns and the same issues with the Russians that you did yesterday that led to the imposition of the new sanctions.

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: And you haven't seen any movement by them towards meeting – toward meeting the – what has been asked of them?

MS. PSAKI: In the last 24 hours, no.

QUESTION: And then – excuse me. I'm not sure if you had a reaction – I don't think you did because it happened so late – but to the EU – the EU's move --

MS. PSAKI: Well --

QUESTION: -- which they said that they would have new sanctions by the end of the month. Is that okay with you guys? Is that --

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, they placed some restrictions – they took steps yesterday to impose costs on the Russian economy. We have been doing these, and including yesterday, in close coordination with the EU. They moved also to put in place the legal framework needed to impose costs on Russian companies that undermine Ukraine’s stability and territorial integrity with an end of July deadline for naming the first list of entities. I think that’s what you’re referring to.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: And certainly, we were coordinating closely with them; we were in close touch with them. And we certainly welcome the steps that the Europeans have taken in this regard. I’m sure you have the details. I’m happy to outline those for you if you have any questions.

QUESTION: One of the companies that was hit by the sanctions yesterday was the Kalashnikov company, the company that makes AK-47s. The Russians today are saying that this specific sanction runs counter to the interest of U.S. consumers. Do you have any comment on that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first say that, clearly, as we are making decisions about sanctions as it relates to here or any around the world, we take into account the impact on the United States, on U.S. businesses and consumers, and certainly we feel that peace and political stability and respect for international law are of critical importance to the global economy and to U.S. businesses.

But let me give you some specific examples of the precautions that we take. The sanctions we imposed yesterday were deliberately crafted to limit, to the extent possible, spillovers on the United States and on third-party countries – third-country companies, pardon me. For example, in the financial sector, we deliberately avoided interfering with day-to-day operations to avoid a shock to global financial markets. In the energy sector, we took steps to limit the ability of certain companies to raise dollar financing, but we have not tried to interfere with their ability to export oil and gas or to maintain their existing joint ventures. So we take into account, of course, any impact on U.S. businesses, U.S. consumers, as we make these decisions.

QUESTION: So these specific sanctions on the Kalashnikov company will not affect American consumers of AK-47s?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I haven’t seen the specific impact that’s been listed. We can – if there are specifics out there, we can certainly look into that, but --

QUESTION: But as far as you know, the ability of the American consumer to purchase semiautomatic assault rifles from Kalashnikov has not been affected. Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: I can check that level of specificity and see if there’s a direct impact.

July 16, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/ Russia
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Do you have any thoughts on Russian plans to reopen its electronic surveillance base in Cuba?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. Well, given, Scott, there hasn't been any formal announcement for – from the Russian or the Cuban Governments, I have very little to say. I'd of course – and would, naturally, have nothing to add on alleged Russian intelligence facilities. So if there's more public statements made, perhaps we'll have more to say.

QUESTION: Can you – can I ask you about --

QUESTION: Jen, staying on Russia, then Ukraine.

MS. PSAKI: Yes. And then we'll go to Michele, sorry.

QUESTION: As you know, the Europeans are meeting today right now --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- soon, and – to discuss potential additional sanctions.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: In the view of the Administration, has Russian – has the Russian behavior gone now to the point where a new – you are encouraging the EU to enact a new round of sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've been engaged in that discussion with them for some time. And obviously, all of our efforts are focused on being coordinated. We know that there's strength in numbers, especially when we're talking about impacting an economy. I – as you noted, the European Council is meeting today. We anticipate they'll discuss Ukraine at their dinner tonight, which should be taking place about now. It's possible we'll have more for you later today when we get closer to the end of the Council's discussions, including from here. But I would just say that we've been encouraging, of course, the Europeans to keep considering and keep on the path of preparing additional sanctions, just as we are doing on our end.

QUESTION: I – understood, but do you believe that the time has come to pull the trigger on new sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: Well again, that's of course up to the Europeans to determine, but we have certainly been discussing the need to keep sanctions prepared and ready to go. And certainly, the actions of the Russian-backed separatists – supported, in many cases, by the Russians – have not given us a great deal of pause in our preparations.

July 15, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/ Russia
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: This leads into my next question, which is: I'm wondering – since we last spoke, since early last week when I was last here – have you seen any movement from the Russians to stop the supplies or what you say, the transfers of weapons and material, from Russia into eastern Ukraine in support of the separatists? Have you seen any change in it?

MS. PSAKI: There have actually been a range of reports, I'm sure you've seen over the course of the weekend, but I don't have anything new in terms of positive steps to outline for you.

QUESTION: Okay. So that would just – going logically, right, your sanctions, while they may have had an impact on the Russian economy according to the IMF, have not had – they have not stopped, slowed, deterred anything that Russia is doing in aid of the pro-Russian separatists in the east. Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have remaining concerns about their support for the separatists. That has not changed. We can't disprove a negative. We don't know what they would have done had these not been in place. That's nearly impossible to guess about.

QUESTION: Yeah, but it hasn't stopped them from doing what you are complaining about.

MS. PSAKI: We have remaining concerns that we continue to express.

QUESTION: Okay. So where does this stand now in terms of contacts between Secretary or other senior people in the Administration and the Russians and the Ukrainians? I saw that Vice President Biden had a couple conversations, but what – where do things stand right now? Are – is it kind of frozen or is there active diplomacy going on despite the fact that the Russians haven't shown any interest --

MS. PSAKI: There continues to be active diplomacy on this issue on the ground. We have – Ambassador Pyatt's on the ground. He remains closely engaged with the Ukrainian Government. We – the Secretary, as you know, regularly speaks with Foreign Minister Lavrov. Let me just see if there's anything specific to read out for you.

I don't have anything specific over the last couple of days, but --

QUESTION: Okay. Do you – there were a couple incidents, I believe – and forgive me if they happened a while ago, but I'm still trying to get caught up with what I missed.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: One, a plane being shot – a Ukrainian plane being shot down, and then the Russians complaining about Ukrainian military firing across the border into Russia. Do you have anything on either of those?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have – there have been a range of reports, which is what I was referring to.

QUESTION: Was referring to before?

MS. PSAKI: We are – I don't have any confirmation of these reports. Obviously, there are statements being made by the Russians. They accused – I think one of the things you were referring to – the Ukrainians of strikes or of shelling Russian – a Russian village. We've heard these comments, but we don't, again, have any confirmation of them. The U.S. Embassy defense attaché received an invitation from the Russian Ministry of Defense to visit the Rostov region, accepted the invitation. The Ukrainian Government, as I noted, has of course, denied these allegations. The trip and the itinerary was controlled by the Russian Government without input from the participants. It wasn't conclusive in our view.

QUESTION: So the attaché from the Embassy in Kyiv or in Moscow?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. I'd have to double-check on that, Matt, but I'll – I can do that.

QUESTION: Okay. But they – the attaché was among others who went to where this allegedly happened and decided – his observation was there was nothing conclusive about what he saw or (inaudible) visit saw --

MS. PSAKI: Sure, where – the cause or where it came from.

QUESTION: -- to prove that. Okay, so are you concerned that the Russians might use such a claim as a pretext to invade, for lack of a better word? To do what they did in Crimea?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've seen a pattern in the past of Russians' comments using incidents to justify military action or direct military engagement. And certainly that is concerning to us. And our view is that if there is such a high level of concern about the violence on the ground or the overflow of it, there are steps they can take to de-escalate which they've chosen not to take at this point in time, the Russian separatists specifically.

July 8, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: I'm just wondering what – it looks like people – the separatists in Donetsk are gearing up for a big – a last stand, and that the Ukrainian authorities are doing the same around these last little enclaves in the east, and I'm wondering what the – if the Administration believes that its – once again, its calls for restraint and for minimization of civilian casualties are being heeded by either or both or neither sides.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we have remaining concerns about the actions of the Russian separatists. I'd also note that President Poroshenko proposed to hold ceasefire talks with the separatists today in the Donetsk region. They have not responded yet. And certainly a peaceful outcome is what would be in the best interests of everyone, in our view. Ukraine, again, has the right to defend their country and their people and maintain calm and order to the degree they can. So we certainly support them in that effort. And there are – continue to be steps that Russia and the Russian separatists can take to de-escalate the situation.

QUESTION: In terms of either side or any of the three sides, two sides, however we want to call this --

MS. PSAKI: It could – it has three-side potential.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: Go back to a triangle.

QUESTION: Right. But let's talk the two sides at the moment, Ukraine and the separatists. Do you have concerns about reports of large – widespread civilian casualties --

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly, and --

QUESTION: -- on --

MS. PSAKI: We would have concerns, of course, about reports of widespread civilian casualties. And obviously de-escalating the situation and bringing an end to the violence is the step that could end civilian casualties. That's where the – one of the reasons we're so supportive of the ceasefire effort.

QUESTION: Okay. But to date, do you believe that either or both or neither side has shown any inclination to heed the call for restraint and for trying to minimize or prevent at all civilian casualties? You were presented here at the briefing yesterday with some graphic photos. I don't know if they could be authenticated or not, but I mean, have you expressed concern to authorities

in Kyiv and also to the Russians for whatever influence they can have with the separatists about things like that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, one, I mean, we – in general, the Ukrainian security forces have sought to minimize casualties among the Ukrainian population during their security operation. There have been numerous reports on the contrary to Russian – the Russian-backed separatists using privately owned buildings as firing positions. We've also seen a great deal of exaggerated and outright false claims from Russian sources throughout the crisis in Ukraine. So certainly we would encourage all sides to minimize civilian casualties, and we've also seen the Ukrainian Government make effort to do just that themselves.

QUESTION: And you have not – but you have not yet seen the Russians use their influence with the separatists to do the same. Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: That's correct.

QUESTION: And then one more thing on this. The Russian foreign ministry has said that the proposal you mentioned just now for Poroshenko was not – the venue is not good. And in fact, I believe some of the separatists or one of the separatist leaders said that venue is no good because it's under the control of Kyiv, which would seem to be a bit of a stumbling block. When you referred to that offer to meet, are you referring to that specific offer or do you not know? I mean, I'm trying to figure out this --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure which offer they're referring to.

QUESTION: You think it's appropriate – you think his offer should be acted – should be taken up by the separatists?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're talking about discussions about the Government of Ukraine – what's happening in the country of Ukraine, I should say. So certainly, I think it's appropriate that it could be held in a government building run by the Government of Ukraine.

QUESTION: Okay.

July 7, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/ Russia
Washington, DC

QUESTION: There were some significant developments over the weekend.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I believe the Ukrainian Government took back one town, and it looks like the separatists are steeling themselves for a defense of Donetsk, I think. What's your understanding of the situation? Do you think that both sides are – that the government is still showing restraint and that the separatists are still not?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: What's the U.S. position?

MS. PSAKI: Well, a few updates. As you noted, over the weekend we all saw reports that the Ukrainian Government was able to expel Russian-supported separatists from the cities of Slovyansk and Kramatorsk. The government immediately moved to begin restoring public services and to providing assistance to residents in need in those areas.

Fighting does continue in the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk, and the option of a cease-fire remains on the table. But it takes two to participate in a cease-fire, and President Poroshenko had that cease-fire for 10 days and didn't see reciprocal participation or engagement from the other side. So there are still remaining steps that we have called on the Russian-backed separatists and the Russians to take. Those remain on the table.

QUESTION: You say that it's two sides, but it would seem that all your discussion is three sides.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the Russian-backed separatists and the Russians are on the same side.

QUESTION: So they – so you equate the separatists with Russia?

MS. PSAKI: I don't think I'm equating, but in terms of --

QUESTION: For the purposes of – for the purposes of this, you think that the – Russia saying yes to a cease-fire is the same thing as the separatists saying yes to a cease-fire?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've long felt that they have a strong influence with the actions of the Russian separatists, and there's more they can do to influence.

QUESTION: Right. Right, but the thing is – is that they had said yes, had they not? I mean, the Russians had supported it; Putin had supported it. But you don't think that that message – or that they did enough to rein in the separatists in fighting the Ukrainian Government, right?

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: Is that – so that would mean that it's three sides to the ceasefire, because you need the separatists to go along with it, and you think that that won't happen unless Moscow says "do it," right?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I still – my view is two sides. We can disagree on the shape of the --

QUESTION: I'm just – whether it's a triangle or a line, I don't know.

MS. PSAKI: Triangle or a line, yes.

QUESTION: But in your view, the Russians still have not done what they should or what you think they should do to --

MS. PSAKI: No. They can allow the OSCE monitors to do their jobs; they can call – they can stop the flow of weapons across the border; they can call on Russian-backed separatists to lay down their arms. There's certainly more steps they can take.

QUESTION: Okay. And have there been any conversations between the Secretary or any senior officials on this issue since Thursday?

MS. PSAKI: With senior Russian officials, or senior --

QUESTION: Ukrainian officials, anyone – just on this subject that you're aware of.

MS. PSAKI: The Secretary has not. Of course, our team on the ground remains in close contact about these issues, and there are ongoing discussions through the Quad meetings – or Quad discussions as well.

QUESTION: But that seems to have, unless I'm mistaken, broken down, right? That – they haven't met since last Thursday or Wednesday.

MS. PSAKI: But they can – they could meet again, certainly, if there isn't a --

QUESTION: The Russians have been calling for another meeting of that group no later than Saturday. You're aware of that?

MS. PSAKI: No later than next Saturday?

QUESTION: No, this past Saturday – than the 5th.

MS. PSAKI: Than last Saturday? Well, they can still convene again.

QUESTION: Right. You would like to see another meeting of the Quad soon. Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly support dialogue between all of the parties, yes.

QUESTION: Do you have any reaction to the --

MS. PSAKI: Let's just --

QUESTION: -- to the statement --

MS. PSAKI: We'll go to you next.

...

QUESTION: President Putin's statement about the Fourth of July and his willingness to work together, and they can resolve all the issues. Do you have any reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: Our view remains that actions speak louder than words, and there are specific steps that can be taken.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: Last week, your colleague Marie Harf doubted the sources of a UN report that talks about a sharp increase in the number of people fleeing Ukraine into Russia. Well, I'm with RT; you don't like RT. What about other news sources, U.S. news sources? And here's The Wall Street Journal writing about the horrors that people face and why they flee to Russia. Are all these sources exaggerating the scale of the crisis there?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's clearly a significant movement of people due to the violence caused by Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, though the vast majority have not sought refugee status. That hasn't changed. There are a few -- and I think Matt asked last week what the difference is between here and Syria, and one of the differences is that there are a range of international organizations on the ground in Syria and NGOs who are calculating or validating the number of asylum seekers or refugees crossing the border.

And so this is single-source reporting strictly from the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Government, and that's one of the reasons that we expressed doubt about the numbers or the range of numbers that were reported in this case.

QUESTION: But it seems that you are downplaying the -- honestly, downplaying the scale of the crisis there. These are just -- that's the reason why I would show these pictures. These are shots of civilians blown to pieces in their homes and their backyards, in the village of -- in the village in eastern Ukraine last week. And Kyiv ordered these killings, nobody else.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think --

QUESTION: What does the U.S. do to stop Kyiv from doing it --

MS. PSAKI: I think --

QUESTION: -- from the village of Kondrashovka. It's --

MS. PSAKI: Well, you finished -- go ahead. I'm letting you finish your question.

QUESTION: Yes, I'm sorry. These are gruesome pictures, but it seems --

MS. PSAKI: I think to be clear, on the ground, the reports that we've seen and the vast majority of people who are reporting from the ground report that the Russian-backed separatists are the ones who are not only engaged in violence and efforts to take over buildings and attack people and innocent civilians. They have no place doing that in a country that's a sovereign country like Ukraine, so that's our issue.

QUESTION: These people died in air strikes ordered by Kyiv -- not by Russia, not by the separatist.

MS. PSAKI: The Government of Ukraine is defending the country of Ukraine, and I think they have every right to do that, as does the international community.

QUESTION: Do the people -- and these people have right to live, don't they?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the people of Ukraine have the right to live in peace and security without Russian-backed separatists attacking their homes and going into buildings. And I think that's where the root cause of this is and we shouldn't forget that fact.

QUESTION: Jen, on the numbers. Are you now -- when you say there's been substantial movement across the border, whether or not these people are technically classified by the UN as refugees or not, are you still saying that you don't think 110,000 is accurate? That's the number that the UN gave last week. Do you still take issue with that number, or do you now accept that even though they're not refugees, there are -- and maybe not all classified as refugees -- there are a hundred -- that the numbers could be as high as 110,000?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the context of what I was trying to explain, Matt, is that there's single-source reporting here just from the Federal Migration Services of Russia. It's not independent international organizations and NGOs reporting, as it is in Syria and some other places, because they're not on the ground. So we don't have any validation of those numbers, though there's certainly no question that there are a range -- a large number of people who are crossing the border because of the violence they're seeing on the ground.

QUESTION: So who is it that you're saying is on the ground in Syria that are collecting these -- are you talking about Turkey and --

MS. PSAKI: There are international organizations, NGOs.

QUESTION: But that would be the UN mainly, right?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, who was the same person that's saying 110,000.

MS. PSAKI: But they're getting reporting from a single source in this case, whereas in other – in Syria, they're getting reporting from a range of international organizations.

QUESTION: So you're saying that the UNHCR is being credulous or they're not looking at these numbers with enough skepticism?

MS. PSAKI: I think – I'm not trying to overstate it. That's just the reason why we see the circumstances differently.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, when you say you acknowledge that there is substantial movement or substantial migration, whether it's actual migration or whether it's refugees or whatever, could that include – I mean, could that – could the number 110,000 – is that a feasible figure?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not going to guess at the specific numbers, Matt. I'm just expressing what our skepticism is about some of the numbers we've seen reported.

QUESTION: All right. And there are no NGOs, no international organizations that --

MS. PSAKI: Not that are reporting numbers on numbers of refugees on the ground to our – that we're aware of.

QUESTION: In Russia --

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: -- or in Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, exactly, in the – what's happening on the ground on the border there.

Okay.

QUESTION: Thank you.

July 2, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/ Russia
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: Okay. Yesterday, Secretary Kerry spoke with Foreign Minister Lavrov by phone.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm, yes.

QUESTION: The two readouts, yours – or the U.S. version's – the U.S. side's and the Russian side, I mean, are pretty diametrically opposed. Given the fact that the message conveyed from Secretary Kerry to Foreign Minister Lavrov and the message from Foreign Minister Lavrov to Secretary Kerry seemed to be at complete odds with each other, are these phone calls – are these conversations worthwhile at all?

MS. PSAKI: Oh, we certainly believe they're worthwhile because it's an opportunity to discuss where you have disagreements and differences. And as you know, readouts are often a portrayal of one side's message to the other side, since we don't typically read out the other side's views. There's no – it's also no secret that we have some ongoing differences of opinion with Russia --

QUESTION: Some?

MS. PSAKI: -- on Ukraine. And certainly, part of the discussion was, in part, focused on that. They also talked about the P5+1 negotiations as well as Iraq.

QUESTION: Right. But I mean, if you could come to – is there any narrowing of – any narrowing of the gaps between the two sides on the issue of Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are talks ongoing. The four-way talks are ongoing. Obviously, keeping a line of communication open, in our view, is important. That's a part of that, and we think that's true as well for our bilateral relationship.

QUESTION: Somewhat related, the Russians have come out – you will have seen – maybe you already talked about Moldova and the --

MS. PSAKI: I have not.

QUESTION: Okay. So they went ahead and ratified this EU agreement today, and some Russian officials are saying that this is a violation of the rights of the people of Transnistria. Do you agree with that?

MS. PSAKI: We don't. We congratulate Moldova on ratifying the association agreement.

QUESTION: Okay. I was going to ask you, has Hong Kong come up?

QUESTION: No, but can I stay on this topic for just a bit?

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: May I just ask – maybe I’ve missed it --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- but why is the United States not a part of the four-way talks?

MS. PSAKI: I – again, we have a range of ways of communicating with all of the countries involved, and I think we’ve been in touch with all of them throughout these talks as well. But --

QUESTION: Well, right, which is why I find it surprising that it’s – the United States isn’t in the room. I mean, it has been quite a major player in this entire – since going back to February and prior to. So I was just wondering if it was seen that it would be more productive for these talks to go on without active involvement by the United States.

MS. PSAKI: I don’t think that’s our view. We’re in close touch with all of the parties involved, and where we can play a useful role, we’re happy to play a useful role.

...

QUESTION: Really? Okay. Well, I’m wondering if you have any comment on what’s going on in terms of the military operations in the east and the attacks by the separatists, as well as the abductions of journalists.

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me first speak to the abductions of journalists. We, of course – and I think you’re referring to the report from the – of the two detained in Luhansk.

QUESTION: Correct.

MS. PSAKI: Well, we condemn the unlawful detention of the two journalists in Luhansk and call for their immediate release, along with that of all the other hostages. We further call on all parties to ensure the safety of media. In terms of events of what’s happening on the ground, our view is that the Ukrainian security forces’ operations have been moderate and measured; they’ve been taking steps to maintain calm within their own country. Our belief is that while President Poroshenko said he’s ready to implement a bilateral ceasefire, any ceasefire must be mutual, and there are steps that the Russians have not taken that they need to continue to take.

In terms of specific events on the ground – and let me just see, I have a quick update on this for you – you may have seen, Matt, but I’ll just reiterate it here, that General Breedlove made some comments earlier this week about Russian regular forces actively facilitating the movement of forces, equipment, and finances across the border. He also noted that Russian irregular forces are very active in Luhansk and Donetsk and are receiving Russian financing. And finally, he noted

that we – that he – they see – we see about seven or more battalion task groups on the Russian side of the border, plus numerous special operation forces. Obviously, that type of troop buildup is certainly of great concern to us.

And as you know, the discussions, the four-way talks, are ongoing. They may have broken for the day, but those are ongoing. And certainly, we support that effort.

QUESTION: But you assess the Ukrainian Government's actions to this point since the end of the ceasefire to today as moderate and measured?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: That's – you don't have any concerns about what they're doing or what either side --

MS. PSAKI: Well, let's not forget that we're talking about Russian-backed separatists and Russians moving troops near the border, moving equipment across the border.

QUESTION: Do you --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

QUESTION: No? If you didn't – I didn't mean to --

MS. PSAKI: And efforts that have been underway to invade, occupy, and attempt to annex part of a sovereign country, which is Ukraine. So they have – they instituted a 10-day ceasefire. They did not have a partner in that effort to institute the ceasefire. But they have a responsibility to maintain calm and order when possible within their own country.

QUESTION: So you see what the Russians are doing now as an attempt to invade, occupy, and annex --

MS. PSAKI: I'm talking about what's happened over the last several months, Matt.

QUESTION: Okay. But it sounds like – and I didn't see the comments from General Breedlove. But you are saying that the Russians actually have moved troops into eastern Ukraine, so there --

MS. PSAKI: Well, I wasn't --

QUESTION: So there is an invasion of a sort?

MS. PSAKI: What he was referring to on – is a buildup on the Russian side of the border that we've been seeing, but decreased and kind of seemed to come back.

QUESTION: Well, ahead of – before you – before that, you said something about them – the Russians facilitating separatists in eastern Ukraine. I mean, are you saying that there are Russian troops --

MS. PSAKI: Irregular forces, so Russian-backed separatists, are very active, as we know, in Luhansk and Donetsk.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: That's what he was speaking to. But he was also speaking to a troop buildup on the border that we know – pulled back, but we've seen it build up again.

QUESTION: So you don't have any – you don't say that there are actually Russian troops in eastern Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: I was referring to his update. I don't believe that we've seen that in terms of a massive influx into eastern Ukraine.

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QUESTION: Really? Okay. Well, I'm wondering if you have any comment on what's going on in terms of the military operations in the east and the attacks by the separatists, as well as the abductions of journalists.

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QUESTION: So you don't have any – you don't say that there are actually Russian troops in eastern Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: I was referring to his update. I don't believe that we've seen that in terms of a massive influx into eastern Ukraine.

July 1, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC

QUESTION: I think we're done. So overnight, President Poroshenko decided not to renew the ceasefire. Yesterday, Jen Psaki said that the Americans would support the decision either way.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And today we've seen a renewed assault by Ukrainian forces in the east against the pro-Russian separatists. Are you still supporting the Ukrainian decision not to resume?

MS. HARF: Yes, we are. And look, it takes two to keep a ceasefire, right. So President Poroshenko put in place a seven-day ceasefire. He abided by it. He extended it for three days, but the fact remained that the separatists, many of them weren't adhering to it, and he has a right to defend his country. So he, at the same time, though, and the Secretary did speak with him yesterday, I believe. He did say he was still committed to a peace plan. So the ultimate goal here is to get back to a ceasefire, get back to a peace plan, but it takes two parties to put that in place and to keep it in place.

QUESTION: And are you worried the situation might degrade even further than it has done in the past?

MS. HARF: I mean, certainly that's a concern, but we are encouraged that President Poroshenko has put forward a path here, a plan to get back to a ceasefire, to get back on track, and now we need to see the separatists doing the same thing.

QUESTION: And is it still the – America's contention that the Ukrainians are showing admirable restraint in their actions in the east?

MS. HARF: It is, yes.

QUESTION: You're not at all worried about what you're seeing, the fighting or --

MS. HARF: Well, look, this is – the Ukrainian forces have a responsibility to defend their territory and their people. And what they're seeing is aggression by Russian-backed separatists that they have an obligation to respond to. We'll look at every situation individually, obviously, but --

QUESTION: What's your response to President Putin's comments today? He said Russia is involved in a historic effort to defend itself. He compared Ukraine to Iraq, Syria, and Libya.

MS. HARF: I don't know what to do with that second part – comparing it to Iraq, Syria, and Libya – so I'm probably not even going to touch it. But I mean, historic in the sense that it's illegal under international law? I mean, sure, under one definition of historic.

QUESTION: So last week --

MS. HARF: I'll give him that.

QUESTION: Last week it seemed like there was time being given to Russia before sanctions were going to be imposed.

MS. HARF: Well, we wanted to see how the ceasefire played out.

QUESTION: And so now that it's over and President Putin's saying things like this, where are we on sanctions?

MS. HARF: We still have the ability to do them – put them in place very quickly. We are talking to the Europeans about them every day. I don't have anything to announce, but we are looking very closely at what we might do next.

QUESTION: President Poroshenko said that the pro-Russian militias are also infiltrated or manned or they have a great many members that are in the Russian secret service. Do you agree with that? Or Russian intelligence.

MS. HARF: Well, I don't have the details on that in front of me, but suffice to say I think we've made pretty clear that we think the Russian Government is involved very closely in backing these separatists, so – no details on that, though.

QUESTION: Was the Secretary's phone call with President Poroshenko just about the end of the ceasefire?

MS. HARF: It was about the situation in Ukraine, the ceasefire – let's see. Expressed U.S. support for the people of Ukraine and for the Ukrainian Government's effort to maintain public order; welcomed his continued commitment to pursue his peace plan, including the offer of amnesty, decentralization of power to the region's political dialogue, and the economic revitalization of the eastern part of the country; also talked to him a little bit about how we and our European partners are willing to do more to press Russia to end support to the separatists; and said we are continually preparing more costs for Russia if it does not take further steps.

QUESTION: Was there any discussion there about the humanitarian situation in the east? I know President Putin had talked to President Poroshenko about this. They're trying to open up a corridor for some kind of humanitarian relief. You have people who are trying to leave the country, there are a lot of refugees there. It's kind of an awful situation and it's also something that the President of Ukraine should also be concerned about. Has anything been done with regard to that?

MS. HARF: Well, certainly the President of Ukraine is concerned about it, but this humanitarian situation there is a direct result of Russian-backed incursions there. There was not a humanitarian situation there before the separatists started killing people. So let's be clear about the cause of this.

In terms of the numbers, I don't know if Jen got this yesterday in detail, but we talked a little bit about the UNHCR's numbers. In many – we don't question the UNHCR's credibility. We obviously think they're an important organization. In many cases such as in Syria, data comes from multiple independent sources. We think that's important to back up the data. In this situation, UNHCR's estimate of the number of people moving across the Ukrainian border comes directly from Russian Government sources who, suffice to say, have not always been entirely accurate here. And – just a couple more points on this because I know there have been some questions – UNHCR's statement did not say that 110,000 refugees fled Ukraine into Russia. What it said is that number of people had crossed the border at some point. That could be to go visit their grandmother and come back. The – only 9,600 people have actually applied for asylum in Russia. And I just want to be very clear when we talk about numbers because there have been some confusion here. And we continue to support the work of UNHCR and attempt to get alternative sources of information for them.

QUESTION: When was the last time the Secretary spoke with Foreign Minister Lavrov?

MS. HARF: I believe they were supposed to talk today. Let me check and see if that happened.

QUESTION: Do you know what's on the agenda for the call?

MS. HARF: I'm sure there's a whole host of topics. I'm sure Ukraine is at the top, probably other topics as well – probably Iraq, probably Syria, probably Iran. But I don't know, so I can check.

QUESTION: Will there be a paper readout also?

MS. HARF: I will endeavor to get one. I'll talk to Jen, who's with them on the road.

QUESTION: Okay.

...

QUESTION: Last one on Benghazi. So who's right here, you or Mrs. Clinton, about the computers?

MS. HARF: I don't think there's a discrepancy between what we said, so I think your question is a false premise.

QUESTION: Well, she's saying --

MS. HARF: And I will defer to the former Secretary of State on this one. I just don't have any more details, Lucas. Let me see if I can get any and share them with you. I understand the discrepancy, but I think there's a difference between a facility with permanent, classified capabilities like safes, like documents, and between maybe having a classified laptop that may come in and out of it. I think there's a difference, but let me check with our experts.

June 30, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine

Washington, DC

MS. PSAKI: Hi, everyone. Happy Monday. So I just have one item at the top. Secretary Kerry – as the White House announced, Secretary Kerry will be visiting Panama July 1st, which is tomorrow, to attend the inauguration of Panama’s president-elect, Juan Carlos Varela. We congratulate President Varela on his victory and Panama’s history of peaceful democratic transfer of power. We have a growing trade relationship, excellent security cooperation, and share many of the same concerns on regional and multilateral issues. Panama is also an important partner of the United States, and we look forward to continuing our close relationship.

During the inauguration, Secretary Kerry will also meet with other Central American leaders to discuss the issue of unaccompanied children who have illegally crossed the border to the United States. A sustainable solution to this urgent situation requires a comprehensive approach to address issues of security, prosperity, and governance, all of which play a role in migration, especially the migration of unaccompanied minors. We hope to continue working with the Central American and Mexican Governments to address the complex root causes of migration and identify ways the United States and countries in the region can more effectively contribute to the effort.

Secretary – I’m sorry, Vice President Biden was in Guatemala just a few weeks ago where he announced a U.S. assistance to increase the capacity of these countries, and I know the President will have an announcement later this afternoon. But the Secretary’s meetings will be part of our effort to engage with these governments and discuss the root causes of these issues.

QUESTION: Sorry. The President will have an announcement on what?

MS. PSAKI: I think you saw on the news or in the newspapers earlier today the President would have more to say on assistance they’re announcing.

QUESTION: Oh, on immigration.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Right. So before – this is --

MS. PSAKI: Did you get a haircut, Matt?

QUESTION: I did.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. (Laughter.) Noted. Noted for the transcript. Go ahead.

QUESTION: I notice you haven't said anything of it. Anyway – (laughter) – when you talk about Panama's peaceful – tradition of peaceful transfers of democratic power, I assume you're talking about recent tradition, yes?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, I was not making --

QUESTION: Not U.S.-assisted --

MS. PSAKI: -- a large, sweeping, historic claim there.

QUESTION: Okay.

...

QUESTION: In an hour or so, or less than an hour – 40 minutes from now – the cease-fire is supposed to expire. I noticed that there was another four-way phone call today between President Putin, Chancellor Merkel, President Hollande, President Poroshenko. And I'm wondering – and out of that, it looks like everyone kind of agreed that it should be extended with the exception of maybe Poroshenko, because I'm not sure that it has been extended yet.

Do you support an extension of the cease-fire and do you think that the Russians have met the – or taken steps to meet the criteria that was laid out by the EU on Friday to do by today?

MS. PSAKI: Well, whether to extend the cease-fire is a decision that Ukraine and only Ukraine will make, and we'd certainly support the decision, whatever decision that they make. But it takes two to implement a cease-fire, and to answer your second question, there are still ongoing reports of fighters from Russia and Russia-backed separatists continuing to attack Ukrainian Government positions. There are still troops on the border. There are still armed militants in Ukraine with – who are posing a threat to the Ukrainian people. So there are steps that we've long been calling for that are a part of what President Poroshenko has been calling for that Russia has not done.

Now they have taken some steps that have been positive steps moving forward, but there's a great deal more that they need to do in order to de-escalate the situation.

QUESTION: Is it your understanding that the – well, first of all, how – this cease-fire doesn't seem to have been much of a cease-fire at all from the very beginning. But I'm wondering what you – because there have been a lot of reports of violations on both sides. But I'm wondering if you – if the U.S. Government's understanding or the U.S. Government's position is that the Ukrainian Government's violations of the cease-fire have come in response – only in response to them being attacked themselves in self-defense. Is that your understanding?

MS. PSAKI: That is my understanding of what's happening on the ground, and the Ukrainians were the ones who called for the cease-fire and exhibited admirable restraint in trying to implement the cease-fire, but there were steps that were taken from Russian-backed separatists that certainly didn't abide by it.

QUESTION: So the Administration's position is that the Ukrainian Government has and still is taking – is still showing admirable restraint in trying to keep the cease-fire alive and that violations are the fault of the Russian – of the separatists. Is that – that's correct?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, and certainly we'd be concerned about any violations, but I'm not – don't know if there were specific ones you're speaking to or reports or anything.

QUESTION: No, just in general. Just what – not anything specific. And then on the sanctions issue, you are not – the Administration is not yet prepared to pull the trigger on new sanctions? Is that --

MS. PSAKI: Well, we remain prepared to impose additional sanctions, including sectoral sanctions should circumstances warrant, in coordination with our allies and partners. But I don't have anything to announce for all of you today.

QUESTION: And my last one on Ukraine has to do with the refugee numbers. I asked Marie about this last week.

MS. PSAKI: I know you had a --

QUESTION: Yes, we had a bit of an exchange.

MS. PSAKI: An active debate.

QUESTION: Well, I wouldn't say debate.

MS. PSAKI: Sorry, discussion.

QUESTION: An active exchange. Is it still your position that the numbers offered by the UN last week of 110,000 are inaccurate or not credible, as she said?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think they certainly – the context here is incredibly important because the UN Refugee Agency claims less than 10 percent of the 110,000 that they have given as a number. 9,600 people have applied for asylum. That is a significantly lower number. So by noting that 110,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Russia, which we don't have a validation of that either, it doesn't give context of in what capacity or how. And it certainly doesn't give validity to Russian claims that hundreds of thousands of people are pouring over the border seeking asylum in Russia.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, it seems to be a bit – I don't know – disingenuous to say that because only a small number of these people have actually applied for refugee – for asylum and refugee status in Russia that – it seems to be disingenuous to say that 110,000 people haven't fled. You --

MS. PSAKI: We're still looking into – I know Marie said this on Friday --

QUESTION: But your argument – your position is not based on – it's – tell me this: Is your position based on the fact that only – that less than 10 percent of 110,000 people have actually applied for – formally applied for refugee status?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's part of the context here. We're still talking to the UN agency about how they arrived at these numbers, but I think that's an important component of the context.

QUESTION: Okay, but that doesn't – that doesn't mean that 100,000 people didn't flee. Just because they haven't formally applied doesn't mean that 100,000 haven't fled, right?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it doesn't mean that they have either, so I think we're --

QUESTION: Well, I – yeah, but – I know, but the UN is starting from the position or telling you or telling the world that 110,000 people have fled, and it just seems a bit odd if you're – if your argument is, well, only 10,000 of them actually applied for refugee status, that means that the whole figure if is wrong --

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, I think part of it is it's unclear if they're relying on Russian claims. And so we're just in discussions with them about how they arrived at these numbers, and I think there's some context that we felt was important to provide.

QUESTION: Okay, well, do you – and I had this – Marie and I had this exchange as well. I mean, is this the only case where you are not sure of the UN High Commissioner for Refugee's numbers? I mean, why do you take their word – the numbers in Syria or outside of Syria, the numbers who have fled Syria if you're not willing to take them on their – not willing to accept them in this case?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm certain if we had a question about the validity of the numbers there, we would have raised it as well. But I – again, we're in conversations with them, and if there's more to say, we'll say it.

QUESTION: To the best of your knowledge, they have not responded with – what are you actually asking them? How did you get your numbers? And then --

MS. PSAKI: Where did you arrive at – how did you arrive at the numbers, exactly.

QUESTION: And are you going to tell them that they have to prove it once they tell you? I mean what do you – I just – I'm not sure what you're looking for. It seems to me that in almost every other situation, you guys accept the information that's given by the UNHCR, and this case is somehow different, and I don't understand – I'm not exactly sure why. That's – why is this case different than Syria where you also don't have people on the – eyes on the ground?

MS. PSAKI: We're just looking for more context and information on the numbers, and we'll be in touch with them about how they arrived at them.

QUESTION: Question about the cease-fire in Ukraine.

MS. PSAKI: About – I'm sorry, which piece?

QUESTION: Because it was unilateral, the cease-fire that was announced, I guess, unilaterally by Poroshenko, correct – by the president of Ukraine?

MS. PSAKI: Correct, mm-hmm.

QUESTION: So in this conversation today where they asked him to extend the cease-fire, it would be up to him to declare that since it is only one-sided?

MS. PSAKI: Up to President Poroshenko?

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Are you sort of leaning on him or are you asking him to extend the cease-fire?

MS. PSAKI: We've – it's a decision for Ukraine and Ukraine --

QUESTION: I understand, but the --

MS. PSAKI: -- only to make. Obviously, we're in close consultations.

QUESTION: Are you encouraging him to extend the cease-fire?

MS. PSAKI: Again, it's for – it's a decision for Ukraine to make.

June 27, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine
Washington, DC

QUESTION: You have seen and the Secretary put a statement out on the EU accession partnership deal – accession.

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: I'm not – so I'm not asking about that because we already know what you think about that. I'm wondering more specifically about this giving – them giving Russia until Monday to prove that it's willing to honor the – or – and support the ceasefire. Is that something that the Administration agrees with? And are you also going to wait until Monday before possibly doing any new sanctions?

MS. HARF: Well, just a few points, and just very briefly. One sentence on the association agreements, you saw the Secretary's statement – I think it is noteworthy that exactly what President Putin was trying to prevent from his interfering in Ukraine has now happened, and he has on top of that a lot of baggage to go with it – and with Georgia and Moldova, happen more quickly than it would've otherwise. So what he was trying to prevent, exactly the opposite happened today.

QUESTION: All right. So you would agree, then, with, perhaps – tell me, would you agree with your former predecessor of yours, PJ Crowley, who said that this – these accession agreements are a big win for the West?

MS. HARF: I think that we absolutely think – look, this isn't about a win for the West; it's about a win for these countries who were able to decide who they wanted to partner with.

QUESTION: Right, so you don't --

MS. HARF: But yeah, we do think this is a very good thing.

QUESTION: But you don't – you would not say from the podium that this is a big win for the West, as he said?

MS. HARF: As much as I would like to always repeat what PJ has said. No, look, I agree with the sentiment, certainly.

QUESTION: You do. Okay. Well, then --

MS. HARF: Yeah, I think this is a good thing.

QUESTION: -- how can you guys claim, then, that this is a zero-sum game -- that it's not a zero-sum game, that there isn't a Cold War, that if you guys are --

MS. HARF: I love these questions that you tee up like this.

QUESTION: -- cheering up?

MS. HARF: I wasn't cheering anything; you teed it up that way. I said I agreed with the sentiment. But what I said first --

QUESTION: Well, exactly.

MS. HARF: -- wait, what I said first --

QUESTION: And then you said it was a big deal.

MS. HARF: -- what I said first was that this is a win for the people of these countries --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: -- who were able to choose who they could trade with more freely, who they wanted to partner with. It's not a zero-sum game. It's not at all.

QUESTION: Well, it sounds as though people are reacting to it like that.

MS. HARF: Well, I'm not going to use those words --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: -- and I'm not going to repeat what PJ said.

QUESTION: Fair enough.

MS. HARF: So, yep.

QUESTION: Okay. So let's go to the three days, the Monday thing.

MS. HARF: Okay. So, yes. So the European Council did make it clear. They -- I think they laid out some conditions. We have never outlined a deadline for sanctions, as I said yesterday. We are in very close consultation with them, but obviously, we can make decisions at the time of our choosing on sanctions, and we have done so and will continue to do so. But look, Russia has standards now it can live up to, right. They've said these are three things you can do --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: -- and we're going to see if they do them.

QUESTION: But you agree with those things? I mean, you --

MS. HARF: That they need to do them.

QUESTION: Yeah, exactly.

MS. HARF: Yes, absolutely. Yes.

QUESTION: I mean, you -- so you are on board with the European Council giving them until Monday to --

MS. HARF: Well, we certainly agree with the steps they've been asked to take. Again, this is a time the European Council decided on. We also note that President Poroshenko has extended the unilateral ceasefire by three days. So some of this timing does match up.

QUESTION: Right, okay.

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: But you are in basic agreement even though you're not going to be bound -- like, you could act tomorrow on sanctions if you wanted to, but --

MS. HARF: Absolutely. Absolutely. And also note that the four of the OSCE monitors were released, which we also do believe is a good thing. There are still four being held. Obviously, we want them to be released.

QUESTION: Okay. And do you have any comment on the former prime minister's case being thrown -- or Tymoshenko's being cleared --

MS. HARF: I don't. I'm happy to see if there's anything we want to say to that.

QUESTION: Now last week and again this week, both you and Jen were very dismissive of these reports of thousands of people fleeing --

MS. HARF: Yep.

QUESTION: -- Ukraine into Russia.

MS. HARF: And I'm going to be again today, but let's talk about it a little bit.

QUESTION: Yeah. Well, last Friday, in response to my saying my question, which was have -- you have seen nothing like this, that there is no mass exodus or even close to thousands that are crossing the border from Ukraine into Russia, fleeing their homes, and Jen replied, "Correct." And then I asked again on Monday -- you -- and I said it's still your understanding that reports in Russia of enormous amounts of refugee flows are incorrect, and you said, "Incorrect, yes."

Well, today the UN refugee agency comes out in Geneva and says that 110,000 Ukrainians have fled this year for Russia – fled Ukraine to Russia – and that 54,000 have fled their homes in Ukraine but have stayed in Ukraine. I'm wondering, were you guys just completely misled by the Ukrainians and by --

MS. HARF: We don't think those numbers are credible.

QUESTION: You think that the UN refugee agency is wrong?

MS. HARF: Right. So let's talk about this a little bit. Let's talk about this a little bit. There – look, it is certainly likely and probable, right, that some thousands may have crossed the border. There's been quite a bit of border crossing both ways, we should note. So there's been a – people go back and forth quite frequently. This is a – as we've now seen – fairly porous border. So the notion that there may be some thousands that have crossed is certainly probable. What we're saying is not credible is the notion that there's 90,000, hundreds of thousands that are fleeing from Ukraine to Russia. We just have seen no evidence to support that. We don't believe they're credible. We're watching; we're monitoring the situation. And obviously, this is – this isn't a science. This is an art in some respects, because you can't have people all along the border. But we just don't think that the hundreds of thousands number is credible. We don't have anything to corroborate it.

QUESTION: But it's not hundreds of thousands, it's 110,000.

MS. HARF: Or that 100,000. We don't – we just don't have anything to corroborate that or show that it's credible.

QUESTION: But I mean – okay, so you --

MS. HARF: We don't have our own evidence.

QUESTION: Okay, fair enough. But then you – that's understandable, but this is the UN. This isn't the Russians saying this. This is the United Nations --

MS. HARF: Right. I'm not saying there's any --

QUESTION: This is an agency that you guys give millions and millions of dollars to --

MS. HARF: Right.

QUESTION: -- and they're now no longer credible?

MS. HARF: We don't have anything to back up that number, Matt.

QUESTION: Well – but you cite UNHCR and you cite the UN Human Rights Commission --

MS. HARF: We do.

QUESTION: -- upon plenty of things that you have no -- don't have your own evidence to back up.

MS. HARF: I don't think that's necessarily true.

QUESTION: Well --

MS. HARF: When we use numbers from people -- outside agencies, I think we tend to back them up with our own analysis as well. But on this we just don't have anything to corroborate the --

QUESTION: You do? So that when they say something about North Korea, where you have absolutely no idea what's going on, you don't have anyone on the ground --

MS. HARF: I would take issue with that a little bit, "have absolutely no idea what's going on."

QUESTION: Well -- yeah, but there's no way that you can back up World Food Program statistics on hunger or malnutrition in North Korea on your own. You just take them and you accept them as credible, because they come from the UN.

MS. HARF: I think you're making some sweeping generalizations about how we do analysis.

QUESTION: I'm wondering why -- is it something with the UN refugee agency that you don't believe? What --

MS. HARF: No. No. Again, we've seen numbers thrown around by a number of people, including the Russians. We don't have any -- we don't think that those huge numbers are credible. We don't have information to back it up. So until we do, I'm not going to stand up here and make assumptions without having facts. So we'll keep looking at it.

QUESTION: I mean --

MS. HARF: And again --

QUESTION: -- some would argue that you -- that by -- that you're doing that already.

MS. HARF: Well, I'm happy to have that argument with someone, whoever that someone might be. But my point is, look, as I said, I can see that -- the fact that there are numbers of people who do travel back and forth.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. HARF: It's a very porous border. There are families that have contacts on both sides. So I can't rule out the possibility that even up to thousands of people have crossed one way or the other.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: But this notion that there's 100,000 Ukrainians who have fled en masse to Russia we just don't believe is credible at this point. We're looking into it. I'm not ruling it out entirely for eternity that we ever could get to that assessment, but we just don't have anything to back it up.

QUESTION: Okay. But I – is there anything – can I ask: Do you have doubts about the UN High Commissioner for Refugees on other --

MS. HARF: We don't.

QUESTION: -- another situation?

MS. HARF: Look, this is a credible organization.

QUESTION: This is the only one?

MS. HARF: Right. It's a credible organization, and we're looking into these reports and seeing if we can confirm them.

QUESTION: Okay. It's a credible organization with incredible figures.

MS. HARF: We just can't confirm their data on this one issue, Matt. I think you can understand that.

QUESTION: So do you think that they have the wrong data, or --

MS. HARF: We don't know.

QUESTION: -- they have some sort of a hidden agenda?

MS. HARF: I don't think they have an agenda. At least, I haven't heard of one. We just don't know, and we can't back it up. And we want to be precise before we come out with our own assessment about what we have information on and what we don't.

QUESTION: Okay. And do you believe that what happened today will give Russia cause to become more belligerent?

MS. HARF: What happened today in terms of what?

QUESTION: In terms of joining the – trading with the Europeans and all the – the decision to do that.

MS. HARF: Well no, because as we've said, look, it's up to the people in these countries to decide their futures. Russia has a path forward here the European Council and others have laid out for them, steps they need to take, and we hope that they take some of them.

QUESTION: So you think this will give them pause to sort of take a look back and maybe --

MS. HARF: We certainly hope it does.

QUESTION: -- be – okay.

MS. HARF: We certainly hope it does.

June 26, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine
Washington, DC

MS. HARF: Today marks one month since Russia based backed – excuse me – Russia-backed separatists kidnapped four OSCE special monitoring mission observers in eastern Ukraine. Three days later, separatists abducted another four OSCE observers. These eight international observers continue to be held hostage. OSCE monitors are in Ukraine to observe and report the facts impartially. We condemn these abductions and call on Russia, indeed itself a member of the OSCE, to use its influence with the separatists to secure the immediate release of the monitors and to guarantee the security of the OSCE monitoring teams.

...

QUESTION: On Ukraine, earlier today, as you are well aware, the Secretary met with French Foreign Minister --

MS. HARF: Fabius. He did. Yes.

QUESTION: -- Fabius. And he – I’m curious if you can extrapolate a little bit or elaborate a little bit on his – what he meant when he said that Russia has hours, literally hours --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- to basically show goodwill to move to disarm the separatists. What – hours is less than days, clearly. What exactly happens if they don’t meet this “hours, literally” deadline?

MS. HARF: Well, a couple points on timing. The weeklong ceasefire expires tomorrow, so that’s partly what was driving the Secretary when he was talking about timing. Also, the European Council is meeting tomorrow to discuss among other things possible additional sanctions against Russia. We’ve been very clear that we remain prepared to impose additional sanctions, including sectoral, should circumstances warrant. I think there were some questions about this the other day, but the March 20th executive order authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to sanction any individual or entity determined to operate in such sectors as – of the Russian economy that we would want to sanction. So we have in place the infrastructure to do this very quickly if we want to.

The Secretary wasn’t outlining specific timing for additional sanctions but underscoring the need that this needs to happen quickly.

QUESTION: But --

MS. HARF: Including partly because of the ceasefire expiring tomorrow.

QUESTION: Right. But there has been discussion on both sides about extending the ceasefire.

MS. HARF: There has been.

QUESTION: That's still something you're supportive of, correct?

MS. HARF: As long as the parties that have signed up to it abide by it.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: So yes, if – of course, if we could get an extension that people abide by, that would be a good thing.

QUESTION: Have the parties, to date, abided by the ceasefire?

MS. HARF: Some of them have and some of them haven't. Some of the separatists have, some of the separatists have not.

QUESTION: Would – but the Ukrainian Government?

MS. HARF: The Ukrainian Government has abided by the terms of the ceasefire. The only time they have taken action is after they have themselves been attacked.

QUESTION: All right. And – but given what the Secretary said in terms of “hours, literally,” is it not more likely that sanctions would come later today or tomorrow, given the fact that the ceasefire expires in --

MS. HARF: I don't have any predictions for you on timing.

QUESTION: But he wasn't (inaudible) discuss the timing of sanctions with that comment.

MS. HARF: He was not. He was not. No. I mean, in general, we've said we could do it very quickly. But no, he was not talking about anything specifically.

QUESTION: Can I ask you a couple of follow-ups on this?

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: Is the United States, as it has done in the past, willing to move forward on additional sanctions on Russia, without the European Union if they do not vote for such sanctions?

MS. HARF: Well, in general, as you know, we've remained very coordinated with them on the sanctions. We think that's important to do. But we make sanctions decisions on our own based

on our own economy and our own interests, but again, believe that they're strongest when they're in partnership with each other.

QUESTION: But you reserve the right to do it on your own if you feel necessary?

MS. HARF: Certainly, but obviously we've remained coordinated with them because we think it's important to do them together.

QUESTION: The authorities under the previous – under the executive order that you referenced I think are – and as you read them – are targeting individuals and companies, correct?

MS. HARF: So they authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to sanction any individual or entity determined to operate in such sectors of the Russian Federation economy as may be determined by, again, the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of State. These sectors include financial services, energy, metals and mining, engineering, or defense or related materiel.

QUESTION: Okay. And the pings are from Europe that they're not going to go forward tomorrow, although obviously --

MS. HARF: Well, we've obviously been talking to them and I think we would just need to wait and see what happens tomorrow.

...

QUESTION: Today the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers took out a full page ad in three leading U.S. publications. I wanted to know if you had any comment on that.

MS. HARF: They did. So since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine, we have had frequent conversations with business leaders and the business community on this issue to explain exactly our policy and understand their concerns. And in general, our sanctions policy towards Russia has been designed to maximize the pressure and the impact on Russia while minimizing the impact on the West and the United States economy as well. So we're trying to do things to change Russia's decision making, obviously, in a very strategic and targeted way that increases the pressure on them while, again, not doing so in a way that doesn't come back on us. We've had those conversations with the business community since the beginning of this crisis.

QUESTION: And you're still continuing to have those conversations with them?

MS. HARF: We are. We are. Yes.

QUESTION: And so does that mean that the business community is aware of the sanction – of what the sanctions are?

MS. HARF: That have already been put in place?

QUESTION: No, the ones that are potentially coming.

MS. HARF: We don't discuss with anyone outside of the government what sanctions might be coming for obvious reasons in the future. What I've said, in our discussions we've talked to the business community about what we've already put in place and our overall strategic goal for how we decide on sanctions.

QUESTION: Well, that doesn't seem to make -- if you're trying to minimize the impact on American companies, it would seem to be -- it would not seem to make sense not to tell them what you're thinking about for this in the future.

MS. HARF: There's plenty of people inside this government that do the calculations about minimizing the risk to our companies and our economy. Obviously, there are good reasons not to tell people outside of the government what sanctions might be coming, because if someone were to find out they might be coming, they could take steps to move their assets around. So that's why we keep that private and internal. But we have the discussions with the business community in general about this issue.

QUESTION: No, no, no. I'm not talking about sanctions that you would impose on Russian individuals, but sectoral sanctions that might limit U.S. companies' ability to do business in Russia.

MS. HARF: Well, we talk in general about the concept and how it might impact our economy. That's certainly true. But we don't specifically talk about new sanctions that might be coming specifically in terms of what individuals or what companies with folks outside of the government.

QUESTION: It's my understanding that some of the sanctions that are in the --

MS. HARF: Pipeline.

QUESTION: -- ready to go if and when a decision's made would impact U.S. companies doing business in Russia.

MS. HARF: Well, we're considering a wide range of sanctions and don't have any comment on the specifics of what they might impact.

QUESTION: Okay. I'm not -- but I'm not even talking about the specifics. I just -- but if you don't consult with businesses --

MS. HARF: We're consulting with them, obviously --

QUESTION: Well, but --

MS. HARF: -- in general, about the concept, Matt. But there are very good reasons not to tell people outside of the government what specific sanctions we're going to put in place.

QUESTION: Well, then I don't see how that minimizes the impact on U.S. companies.

MS. HARF: There are a lot people inside this government who can do very good calculations about how potential sanctions might impact U.S. companies or U.S. – the U.S. economy.

QUESTION: Well then, why don't --

MS. HARF: And they do those calculations, and we take them into account when we're deciding what additional sanctions to put in place.

QUESTION: Right. Well, yeah. But who knows better how a specific sanction is going to affect a U.S. company than that company itself?

MS. HARF: Well, again, we have people who are very good at looking at that inside the Department of the Treasury.

QUESTION: And I'm --

MS. HARF: And we have good reasons not to discuss specifics with people outside.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, I'm sure that Fortune --

MS. HARF: Do you want Russian oligarchs moving assets around because they might accidentally find out it's coming?

QUESTION: No. No, no, no. I'm not talking about -- no. I'm not talking about the impact on Russians or telling them that person X in Russia is going to be affected. But if there are sanctions that are going to impact U.S. companies' ability to do business in Russia, which I am led to believe there are in the pipeline, it strikes me as a bit unusual that you wouldn't talk to the companies about what could possibly be coming so that they could protect themselves.

MS. HARF: We talk in general about what possibly might be coming.

QUESTION: I understand, but you're saying that there are people in the government who know -- you're suggesting that people in government know better about --

MS. HARF: I'm not saying that, Matt. Look, you're taking us down a rabbit hole here.

QUESTION: I don't want to, especially today, but --

MS. HARF: I know, but you are. But wait, let me finish up with one point. We talk to them in general. I just read a bunch of sectors, right?

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: We talk to them in general about what those might look like and how they might impact the American economy and American companies. Those discussions can be very robust without saying on X date we're going to sanction X company, because there are very good reasons we don't give that information out to people. But we are very – we have very robust discussions about ways to minimize the impact. We really do.

QUESTION: Okay.

....

QUESTION: Ma'am, as far as sanctions against Russia is concerned, are you in touch with other countries other than the NATO or Europeans, like China and India and other countries?

MS. HARF: We've been in touch with a wide range of countries on this issue. I don't have a full list in front of me, but I'm happy to see if there's more specifics.

QUESTION: Thank you, ma'am.

June 25, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine
Washington, DC

QUESTION: You will have seen that the – there was a four-way phone call this afternoon --

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: -- between President Hollande, Chancellor Merkel, President Poroshenko --

MS. HARF: Poroshenko.

QUESTION: -- and President Putin.

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: I don't presume that you were listening in on the call, although since Chancellor Merkel was on it, maybe you were. (Laughter.)

MS. HARF: I think we made very clear we don't do that.

QUESTION: What do you make --

MS. HARF: I just want to know what language they all spoke. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: What do you make of it, because there --

MS. HARF: I actually --

QUESTION: -- have been various readouts of it from each government. I'm just wondering if you can give us --

MS. HARF: So I haven't -- our folks are still looking at them. We don't have any analysis to do on it now, but we will shortly.

QUESTION: But the mere fact that this call took place --

MS. HARF: We said dialogue is important.

QUESTION: You think that it's a good thing?

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: We do think dialogue, particularly between Poroshenko and President Putin, is important.

QUESTION: There are numerous – well, at least two, probably more by now – about new sanctions being prepared by both the Administration and your – the European Union --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- ahead of this EU summit that's coming up tomorrow and --

MS. HARF: The EU Council, I think, meets Friday.

QUESTION: Friday.

MS. HARF: And sanctions will be one topic discussed among many there.

QUESTION: Right. Can you say – are you close to an agreement with the Europeans on doing this, and are you concerned at all that President Putin's announcement yesterday and then the move today by the state council, or whatever it's called, to revoke --

MS. HARF: The upper chamber.

QUESTION: -- the upper chamber to revoke --

MS. HARF: Yes, which is not the Duma. I was incorrect yesterday when I said that.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: It is the Russian Federation Council.

QUESTION: -- the Federation Council to revoke the use of force authorization, that that would have an effect on whether or not the Europeans would be more or less enthusiastic about going for new sanctions?

MS. HARF: Well, we are working intensively with our European partners. As I said, they have a meeting on Friday where this will be one of the topics discussed. And we are judging every single day on a daily basis progress or backsliding. Yes, this was a good step in terms of the revocation of the law, but as you heard the Secretary say, it could be put back on very quickly. What we have said is we need to see Russia secure its border, stop the flow of fighters and weapons into Ukraine, and call on separatists to lay down their arms and release the OSCE hostages.

So those are the important actions we're looking for, and we will continue to judge Russia by those actions. We have additional sanctions ready to go. We're continuing to talk to the Europeans, and if we're going to impose them at some point, we will do so.

QUESTION: Like ready to go, like they could be done in --

MS. HARF: They can be done very quickly.

QUESTION: With a signature?

Can I --

QUESTION: Just on this?

QUESTION: Yeah. Well, I just want to --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: When you say that you're judging every single day --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: What's your judgment today?

MS. HARF: You want me to do another analogy yesterday with steps forward and backwards?

QUESTION: Well, you said --

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: I mean, in response --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) fighters crossing --

MS. HARF: Yes. So again, we welcome the Federation Council's decision to repeal the resolution authorizing the use of military -- Russian military force in Ukraine. The repeal is a step in the right direction. We, though, are aware that a number of Russian combat units have deployed to locations close to the Ukrainian border. This is not in keeping with the intent -- with the Russian intent to de-escalate the situation. We have seen Russia take some steps, again, including by revoking the resolution. But we really need Russia to do more.

So today we've seen some tiny steps, but much, much more needs to be done.

QUESTION: So you do think that the Russian intent is to de-escalate?

MS. HARF: Well, they've said it is.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: But their actions have not backed up those words.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: Just so we're clear --

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: -- you said we have seen a number of Russian combat forces deployed near the border with Ukraine. Is that in the last 24 hours, or is that in reference to the massing over the last --

MS. HARF: It's my understanding that that's ongoing, but let me check with our folks and see.

QUESTION: Okay. And any more -- sorry. Any more on materiel either being readied to cross the border or crossing the border?

MS. HARF: Nothing new. Nothing new on that.

QUESTION: Is it -- so is it continuing?

MS. HARF: That's my understanding, yeah.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: Yesterday I think that in my -- one of my questions I misstated what the U.S. position might be regarding -- we were talking about Iraq, and then I tried to segue into Ukraine, talking about --

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: -- what kind of government that you would like to see in Ukraine. What --

MS. HARF: I think I may have misspoke here a little bit.

QUESTION: If -- well, I misspoke as well, because I was the one that kind of said -- but I just want to know, what is the Administration's position on what an acceptable, inclusive, fair, representative-of-everyone government would be in Ukraine?

MS. HARF: Yes, yes. And I think we both got tangled up over words.

So what we understand is that President Poroshenko has offered greater decentralization of authorities, and that's the word I should've used. He's not talking about creating what we would call a federal structure. So what that looks like is obviously up to the people of Ukraine to decide, but as part of his peace plan he's talked about decentralization. What that looks like they're talking about internally right now.

But I think there was some confusion, particularly in the Russian press, about what I said in terms of the word "federal" --

QUESTION: But --

MS. HARF: -- which has a very different context in Iraq and a very different context in the United States. So I want to be very clear that's not what he's offering or what we would support in Ukraine.

QUESTION: What -- right. Well, I'm -- I mean, I'm interested in what he's offering, but I also want to know what the U.S. would think is a good idea. So you think that a --

MS. HARF: We support greater decentralization that all of the Ukrainian people agree to.

QUESTION: Can you explain, though, what -- or is that for the Ukrainians to decide, how much decentralization --

MS. HARF: Yeah, it's for the Ukrainians to decide.

QUESTION: But you're not looking for -- it could be its own model. It's not something that's modeled on, say, what we have, or what Brazil has, or what Iraq had or may have in the future.

MS. HARF: Right.

QUESTION: It's --

MS. HARF: It's up to them to decide what that looks like --

QUESTION: It's a Ukrainian model, all right.

MS. HARF: -- but I know that the -- particularly the word "federal" is a particularly loaded one in the Russia-Ukraine context, and I want to make clear that's not what we support there.

QUESTION: All right. And then you will be familiar -- I think, maybe -- with the comments that the NATO secretary general made today. Are you familiar with them?

MS. HARF: I -- which ones specifically?

QUESTION: At one point he said that NATO has tried for the past 20 years to work with Russia, but they have broken the rules and eroded trust. I'm wondering if – that was Rasmussen. Does the United States – does the Administration agree with that?

MS. HARF: I think we would certainly agree with that. We've said very clearly that what they have done in Ukraine is in violation of international law, they have broken the rules, and that it has eroded trust. When they're sending tanks and RPGs over a border into a sovereign state, I don't know how it could do anything but, quite frankly.

QUESTION: Okay. But this – he seemed to be talking about the last two decades, that they've been doing this the entire time. Are you just --

MS. HARF: Oh, I --

QUESTION: Are you agreeing with him over – in the course of the – just in terms of Georgia and Ukraine?

MS. HARF: I'm talking about recently. I'm talking about recently.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Look, more broadly speaking – I guess I can speak for this Administration – it has been a complicated relationship. There have been times we've been able to work together, whether it's on New START, whether it's on the resupply lines into Afghanistan, other issues – Iran being one, the nuclear issue – but there have been places where it's been much more challenging.

QUESTION: Well, I'm wondering if you think it is – if you could – if you can – if you agree with what the secretary general said.

MS. HARF: And I didn't see them in context, so I don't want to --

QUESTION: Right. Well, I mean, that was pretty much a – it was a context about – talking about Ukraine and talking about the strained relations between NATO specifically and Russia.

MS. HARF: Russia, over Ukraine.

QUESTION: Well, not just over Ukraine. I mean, he's talking about 20 years. So I assume he's talking about Georgia as well; I'm assuming he's talking about other things.

MS. HARF: Yeah. I mean, we're all aware of the tough history here.

QUESTION: But what I'm wondering is if you agree with that, if it's not – if you can't also see Russian complaints that NATO may have acted in the same way, you – would you reject that?

MS. HARF: Reject out of hand, absolutely. What – the difference here is that any activity we’ve done to shore up our NATO partners, any actions we’ve taken have been to defend our partners and to defend sovereign countries. What Russia did was very different. Invading neighboring countries, sovereign states – there’s just not an equivalence here.

QUESTION: Right. But from their perspective, going back many years, NATO and the United States in particular as the main ally in NATO, has done equally – well, maybe not equally, but has done provocative things, at least provocative to them. It’s expanded into their backyard, it’s -

MS. HARF: We’ve been very clear that expansion is not intended at all to be a provocative step.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: So we would disagree with their characterization of it.

QUESTION: But just because you say so doesn’t mean that that’s the way they see it, right? And so, I mean, if you’re trying to find a common understanding here, I’m not sure – you say you’re trying to find a common understanding and to cooperate with them, but at the same time you completely reject out of hand all of their arguments that are very similar to what the NATO secretary general said about them.

MS. HARF: Well, no, I think they’re just – they’re drastically different situations. But that’s why, as we’ve expanded NATO, we’ve talked to the Russians about it. When we’ve talked about other issues like missile defense, we have talked to them about it. We know their position, but we have consistently tried to make it very clear to them that it’s not directed at them.

QUESTION: Yeah, but – see, every time you’ve done a NATO expansion or done a missile defense, they’ve said no, no, no, don’t do it, it’s a bad idea, and you say, well, sorry, thanks for telling us, but --

MS. HARF: Right. We’re not going to not do things that are in our national security interest because the Russians don’t like them. But we do think it’s important to make clear to them what our intentions are, and that’s very different – talking about missile defense is very different than invading a sovereign country.

QUESTION: Okay. I’m not going to argue, but --

MS. HARF: Right. So I think if they see them equally in some way, that’s just delusional.

QUESTION: So everything that you say and do is right and everything that they --

MS. HARF: No.

QUESTION: -- say and do is wrong? I mean --

MS. HARF: I'm saying everything we do in terms of NATO reinforcement and reassurance, including missile defense, we make very clear to them, transparently, is not aimed at being provocative at Russia.

QUESTION: Right. I understand that you tell them that, but they clearly --

MS. HARF: Whether or not they choose to believe that is their decision. I think the world can see --

QUESTION: So it's their fault, then. Right?

MS. HARF: Well, I think the world can see the blatant differences between missile defense designed to not confront Russia and invading a sovereign country.

QUESTION: Can you think of one time where you have gone to the Russians and said, okay, we want to do X, Y, and Z, and you have actually taken their concerns on board?

MS. HARF: Well, we certainly take their concerns on board and have discussions with them. That doesn't mean we're going to change --

QUESTION: Before rejecting them.

MS. HARF: It doesn't mean we're going to change what we think is in our national security interest to do.

QUESTION: Okay. So your argument is that the United States and NATO do what is in the national interests of its members and NATO's interests, and what Russia does that they think are in their -- is in their interest -- that what NATO does is good and that what Russia does --

MS. HARF: No.

QUESTION: -- in pursuit of what it thinks --

MS. HARF: What NATO does to protect its own sovereign territory is in our interest. What Russia has done is invade another sovereign territory.

QUESTION: Okay, you don't --

MS. HARF: I'm not sure how that could be in Russia's interest.

QUESTION: Okay. All right. Thank you.

June 24, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Right. So it is correct that you support a united federal Ukraine too, right?

MS. HARF: That is correct, Matt.

QUESTION: It is correct. Okay.

So on that – based on that, what do you make of President Putin’s comments today about the cease-fire, his decision to go to --

MS. HARF: To the Duma.

QUESTION: -- to the Duma to have the force authorization removed?

MS. HARF: Yeah. Well, a couple points on this. Look, we welcome – there was also a decision today by some separatist leaders to accept the cease-fire. At the same time, we also saw some separatists shooting down a Ukrainian helicopter, so clearly – not surprisingly, the separatists all aren’t on the same page.

President Putin did ask the upper chamber of Russia’s parliament to repeal – I think it was the March 1st resolution authorizing the use of Russian military force in Ukraine. This resolution had raised tensions, and its removal would be a step in the right direction. Obviously, we need to see other steps, like ending its occupation of Crimea as well.

QUESTION: Was this something that you guys had sought – specifically sought from or asked of Putin? When you say in numerous conversations that the Secretary has had with Foreign Minister Lavrov, and less numerous but still several conversations that the President has had --

MS. HARF: President Putin --

QUESTION: -- with President Putin --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: When you talk in general terms about de-escalation, is this one of the things that --

MS. HARF: It’s a good question. I don’t know.

QUESTION: -- has come up?

MS. HARF: If it's been brought up before, I'm – specifically – I'm happy to check.

QUESTION: And in terms of the shootdown of the --

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: The downing of the helicopter, do you – is this the end of the cease-fire, despite the words from everyone for --

MS. HARF: No. No, I wouldn't say that. Look, this cease-fire and the negotiations surrounding it are really Ukraine's best chance for peace. And we do welcome the fact that some separatists have said they will accept it and abide by it. But clearly, more negotiations need to happen, and we have called on President Putin to use his influence with these separatists to get them to also accept the cease-fire.

QUESTION: And you – but you have not yet seen that except for the several that have said they would respect the cease-fire? Have you seen that more broadly? Are you still seeing movement of – what you've said is movement of tanks --

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: -- and heavy armaments?

MS. HARF: Yes. None of that has changed, and continue to see a number of Russian combat units being deployed to locations close to the Ukrainian border as well.

QUESTION: The buildup is continuing.

MS. HARF: My understanding --

QUESTION: Does the fact that the building is – buildup is continuing, and you've now said this a couple days – I mean, you certainly said it yesterday, and Jen was saying it last week. Does that make you take any less seriously President Putin's request that the Duma remove the authorization?

MS. HARF: As I said, taken by itself, the request to remove the authorization would be a good step in the right direction. But again, words need to be matched by actions. And this is a situation where you take two steps forward and one step back. Some separatists accept a cease-fire, some don't. A helicopter gets shot down. So we've seen some steps out of President Putin that we do think are a move in the right direction, but there are actions that need to be taken that we haven't seen taken.

QUESTION: Any more – do you have any more evidence of Russian materiel either being prepared for transit or actually crossing into Ukraine?

MS. HARF: Not any new evidence. I think we've laid out over the past week a fairly robust case of those tanks and rocket-propelled grenades.

QUESTION: Sorry. Do you – when you said that it's two steps forward, one step back, is that how you see this situation, or was that just kind of a rhetorical --

MS. HARF: Well, I think both can be true.

QUESTION: Both?

MS. HARF: I mean, it's a rhetorical example of how we do see some positive signs on the ground.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: The cease-fire, some separatists have accepted it, but the same day some other separatists shot down a helicopter. The – President Putin says he'll go to the Duma, that's good, but then they continue the military buildup.

QUESTION: Right. But two steps forward and one step back is still one step forward, right? So that's --

MS. HARF: I wouldn't be too precise – read into the numbers. It was a rhetorical device. I think --

QUESTION: Oh, okay. All right. I just wanted to make --

MS. HARF: -- to be clear, that – look, there has been some progress, but at the same time, it often feels like we are taking steps backward from where we need to be.

QUESTION: Right. But I mean, the fact that you used that --

MS. HARF: Not a precise mathematical calculation.

QUESTION: I know, but the fact that you said --

MS. HARF: Then why do you ask if you know?

QUESTION: Because you said – no, no, because the fact that you said “two steps forward, one step back” instead of “one step forward and two steps back” suggests that there is --

MS. HARF: I was quoting a popular '80s song I used to listen to on the radio.

QUESTION: Fine, but it --

MS. HARF: If anyone knows who that's by, I'll buy you dinner.

QUESTION: But you're not saying that you see things going in a positive trajectory.

MS. HARF: No, I wasn't saying that.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Well, there are positive signs, but in terms of the trajectory there's a lot of work that needs to be done.

QUESTION: Okay.

...

QUESTION: On the sanctions that you guys have put on Russia. Am I correct in thinking that if the situation doesn't improve, there will be more sanctions but it – if it does improve there possibly won't be; however, the existing sanctions that were put in place because of the Crimea annexation won't be taken away? Is that correct?

MS. HARF: Well, we're not obviously going to – into our specific sanction strategy publicly. I think that's probably not advisable for the people on the sanctions list or who might be sanctioned. In general, what we've said is we put sanctions on place in response to specific activities and actions by the Russian Government. The potential for those to come off would only happen after the Russian Government undertook certain steps to rectify the situation and that we have more in place ready to go if they don't de-escalate, and indeed, of course, if they take further steps.

QUESTION: Well, maybe I can rephrase it to get a --

MS. HARF: You want me to outline when we're going to put more sanctions on and when we'll take them off.

QUESTION: No, no, no, no. I'm trying to find out if, in fact, the sanctions that were imposed immediately after the annexation of Crimea – are – will stay in place as long as the Russians stay in Crimea.

MS. HARF: I'm happy to check and see if there's more detail we can share.

QUESTION: To get rid of those, and do you – and --

MS. HARF: We generally don't outline what people need to do specifically to get rid of sanctions publicly.

QUESTION: That may be one reason why you never get what you're looking for from these people, because you don't tell them what they have to do, so they're left to guess.

MS. HARF: I think we've privately been very clear. It just doesn't make sense to outline them publicly.

QUESTION: Why?

MS. HARF: Because giving the world insight into your sanction strategy – part of what – how sanctions are imposed and how they're effective is if people don't know they're coming and don't know when they'll come off.

QUESTION: Well --

QUESTION: Can we go back --

QUESTION: What?

MS. HARF: If you think about how – that's why we don't make sanctions public or the names public before we impose them.

QUESTION: But you – yeah, but they have to know --

MS. HARF: And we don't tell people when they're going to come off necessarily.

QUESTION: Well, but you have to tell them what they --

MS. HARF: Or what they need – right. We have those conversations privately, just not publicly.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Right.

QUESTION: But is it incorrect that the sanctions that were imposed for Crimea, for the Crimea annexation --

MS. HARF: I don't have more specifics for you.

QUESTION: -- will remain in place as long as Crimea is occupied?

MS. HARF: I'm happy to check if we can say yes or no to that one way or the other, Matt. I'm happy to check on that.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: Can we --

MS. HARF: Yes. Wait, I'm coming --

QUESTION: New topic?

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: Sudan?

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: Do you have information about this – the status of this woman, Christian woman who has been --

MS. HARF: I have a little bit.

QUESTION: -- has been rearrested, apparently? And since you welcomed yesterday a release, were you in contact with the Sudanese authorities?

MS. HARF: So the State Department has been informed by the Sudanese Government that the family was temporarily detained at the airport for several hours by the government for questioning over issues related to their travel and I think travel documents. They have not been arrested. The government has assured us of their safety. The Embassy has been and will remain highly involved in working with the family and the government. We are engaging directly with Sudanese officials to secure their safe and swift departure from Sudan, and of course, we'll provide more information as we get it.

QUESTION: Were they traveling to the U.S.?

MS. HARF: I don't have more details for you on their travel.

QUESTION: You said temporarily detained.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Is it your understanding --

MS. HARF: For several hours.

QUESTION: -- that they were released?

MS. HARF: Yes. They were temporarily detained for several hours over questions relating to their documents. They have not been arrested, have since been released.

QUESTION: Do you know where they are?

MS. HARF: We, obviously, aren't going to get into specific details about their location.

QUESTION: Well, no. I don't want to know the address, but --

MS. HARF: And --

QUESTION: They're still in Khartoum?

MS. HARF: And the Sudanese Government has assured us of their safety, and we are working with the government to assure their safe passage out of the country.

QUESTION: Are they being prevented from leaving the country?

MS. HARF: Again, we're working with the government on this. They today were not able to, I think, because of some travel document issues, but we're working with the government to resolve those issues.

QUESTION: Do you -- well, do you buy this explanation from the Sudanese and do you think it's just another example of harassment, or do you think it was some legitimate concern?

MS. HARF: I don't have any details to make that kind of judgment, Matt. I think what we're focused on is working with the government to get them out of the country, and they said they'll work with us.

QUESTION: Do you know -- okay. Well, so you would consider that to be positive even though this is not a good thing that --

MS. HARF: We just want the right outcome here.

QUESTION: Okay. Were there people from the Embassy with them when they were detained?

MS. HARF: I can check on that. I'm not sure.

QUESTION: Because there is -- the husband is an American citizen. Correct? And so presumably, you would be offering or the Embassy would be offering assistance to --

MS. HARF: Right. We have been assisting. I'm happy -- I don't know the specifics, though. It's, I think, a fairly fast-moving and fluid situation.

QUESTION: Okay. But -- and -- but do you know enough to be able to say -- the Sudanese say that they weren't mistreated or that they're safe. Do you know enough to be able to confirm that independently that they weren't --

MS. HARF: The government has assured us of their safety. I don't -- I don't have anything to indicate that's not the case. But again --

QUESTION: Okay. But --

MS. HARF: -- what we're focused on is getting them as quickly as possible out of Sudan.

QUESTION: Right. But I just – you don't know at the moment if someone from the Embassy had eyes on them to --

MS. HART: I'm sorry, I just don't. I'm happy to check with our folks.

QUESTION: Are you helping them with the documents that they need or --

MS. HART: I'm not going to go into more specifics about their travel. As I said, we are committed to helping them in general.

Yes.

QUESTION: Do you know if there's been a formal application for asylum with the U.S. Government on her (inaudible)?

MS. HART: I think for any of those questions you need to check in with Homeland Security and Customs and Immigration. I think they're best able to answer those.

...

QUESTION: It's my understanding that under the immigration law and the asylum law that they actually have to be on U.S. territory to apply, which makes it relevant as to whether they are in the Embassy, which would be U.S. territory, or not. So just to add some urgent – add some fodder to the taken question on whether there's been contact.

MS. HART: I understand. Yeah.

QUESTION: Have they gone to the Embassy --

MS. HART: So I'm not, obviously, going to get into details about their location. I'm happy to see if there are more details, and by tomorrow, hopefully, we'll have more details to share.

June 23, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Well, it's just that you say that Ukraine is the -- is why --

MS. HARF: Just one example.

QUESTION: -- one -- is one example of this, but --

MS. HARF: Afghanistan is another.

QUESTION: But using Ukraine as an example would seem to be problematic because the Russians have actually annexed Crimea. They take --

MS. HARF: But you asked what our relationship was based on, and I said shared values --

QUESTION: No, I know.

MS. HARF: -- and shared interests --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: -- and finding a better path forward for Ukraine where Russia is not able to do the kind of things we see them do is a shared challenge we are confronting together.

QUESTION: Well, right. But my question wasn't about what the relationship with Poland is based on. It is why --

MS. HARF: That's exactly what you asked.

QUESTION: No, it's not. I was asking why the person, whoever said these things, is wrong. And the person who said these things said that the relationship between Poland and the U.S. is worthless and that it, in fact, can hurt, because it creates a false sense of security. I didn't ask about whether there were shared values. I don't think --

MS. HARF: Well, but that's why he's wrong about the first part, whoever this was on this tape, that it's useless --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: -- because we have shared interests, and we are working to confront them together.

QUESTION: But shared interests doesn't – that doesn't necessarily mean that it's – that the relationship is worth anything, does it? I mean, that's the reason that there is a relationship. It doesn't add value to it. So --

MS. HART: Well, I think you've also seen the President and the Secretary talk quite a bit about reassurance of our allies since the situation in Ukraine, and we've taken steps to shore them up. So that's – when we talk about security of countries like Poland, we've taken concrete steps to say we will stand by our allies in the face of Russian aggression in this region. So that would seem to be worth something.

QUESTION: Well, right. Except that – well, yeah. But what you have done in response to what you claim is – what you say is Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea --

MS. HART: Absolutely.

QUESTION: -- is sanctions, which may or may not be having the -- they certainly don't -- they haven't --

MS. HART: I think most economists would disagree with that notion. I think they've been pretty clear they are having an effect --

QUESTION: Well, I'm --

MS. HART: -- on the Russian economy, at least.

QUESTION: Yeah. But they haven't had any effect on who runs Crimea.

MS. HART: Well, look --

QUESTION: Russia hasn't said, "Okay. Uncle. Enough. We're going to pull out of Crimea," because of them.

MS. HART: Again, Russia has a decision to make. They can continue running their economy into the ground and hurting their own people, or they can take steps to uphold their obligations under international law.

QUESTION: But that's not my question, Marie. Marie, I'm trying to figure out why it is that the Poles should take heart from policy – from Ukraine being an example of the great value of a relationship with the United States and NATO, when the United States and NATO haven't done anything, at least effectively, to get the Russians out of Crimea.

MS. HART: I think we've done – taken a number of steps to reassure allies like Poland, including deploying detachments of U.S. planners to augment their capabilities, to reassure them of their security in the face of Russian aggression. I think we've taken a number of concrete steps in Poland and elsewhere.

QUESTION: Isn't one big difference between Poland and Ukraine --

QUESTION: Well, it's a NATO ally, yes. But --

QUESTION: -- is that Poland is a member of NATO and Ukraine is not?

MS. HARF: Absolutely.

QUESTION: Well, but no --

MS. HARF: But we are confronting Russian aggression in Ukraine in part by reassuring our NATO allies and taking concrete steps to show them we will stand by them.

QUESTION: Okay. Do you know, just is anyone from the Embassy or this building trying to follow up to find out if, in fact, Mr. Sikorski said this stuff?

MS. HARF: I'm happy to check. I don't know.

QUESTION: All right.

MS. HARF: Yes.

...

QUESTION: So the President and President Putin spoke today, according to the White House and according to the Kremlin. I won't ask you about that call, unless you want to say more than what the White House already said about it.

MS. HARF: I think I'll punt to the White House.

QUESTION: Okay. You've seen that the Russian -- the separatists, the rebels in the east, have said that they will respect or that they plan to respect the ceasefire. I presume you think this is --

MS. HARF: We've seen those claims. But again, actions have to back up the words.

QUESTION: Okay. Have --

QUESTION: Will four days make a difference?

MS. HARF: I'm sorry?

QUESTION: Will four days make a difference?

MS. HARF: Look, we would support any side taking steps to work towards a cease-fire. Obviously, we need to see those steps taken to support the words that we've now seen from President Putin and others.

QUESTION: But not – I’m not talking about what President Putin – I mean, President Putin has come out and said that he supports the cease-fire as well --

MS. HARF: Yes. No, I was responding to your question.

QUESTION: -- but he’s also said that – okay, so you’re – I’m talking about the separatists.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm. As I said, there are words out there people have spoken about supporting the cease-fire --

QUESTION: Right. Okay.

MS. HARF: -- but we haven’t seen actions taken to back that up yet.

QUESTION: Okay. Have you seen any – in terms of actions, what have you seen? Has it gotten worse?

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: Has it gotten --

MS. HARF: It has, in some respects. We have seen evidence of continued Russian military support to the separatists, and a new ongoing build-up of Russian forces on the border.

QUESTION: Okay. On Friday, there was discussion in here and in a conference call with a senior official about Russian tanks moving or having left – they were being prepared at a site --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- in southwest Russia and then there were indications that some of them might have left that site. Is that still the case?

MS. HARF: Yeah. So --

QUESTION: Do you – have they – are you aware that they have gone into Ukraine?

MS. HARF: Right. And as we said, I think, last week on June 13th, Russia sent tanks from a deployment site in southwest Russia into eastern Ukraine. And we have information that additional tanks have been prepared for departure from the same site. On June 20th the OSCE reported eyewitness accounts seeing a military convoy of unknown origin driving through Luhansk city. This convoy included tanks and armored personnel carriers. We also have ground photos from the destroyed BM-21 multiple rocket launchers in Luhansk, that the launcher originally belonged to a Russian motorized rifle brigade. So there’s a host of information that tanks, rocket launchers are crossing the border from Russia into Ukraine.

QUESTION: And all of this is post-Friday?

MS. HARF: I can check on the timing.

QUESTION: There was one thing – yeah.

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: I had basically the same question, which was the briefer on the call couldn't confirm that any of the tanks that the U.S. Government has information had left --

MS. HARF: Have crossed?

QUESTION: -- had actually crossed.

MS. HARF: I'm happy to check and see what the status of that is.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: And is it still your understanding that reports in Russia of enormous amounts of refugee flows are incorrect?

MS. HARF: Incorrect. Yes.

QUESTION: Okay.

June 18, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: I'd like to go to Ukraine. And today, President Poroshenko announced plans to order a unilateral ceasefire in the east, which would allow the pro-separatists – the pro-Russian separatists to lay down their arms. Is this something you would welcome? Is this a good step?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we certainly welcome President Poroshenko's announcement that Ukraine would implement a ceasefire as a first step of a peace plan, a plan he discussed with President Putin during a phone call last night. President Poroshenko reiterated that amnesty would be offered to those who lay down arms voluntarily and who are not guilty of capital crimes.

He also committed to providing a safe corridor for Russian fighters to return to Russia. He's been clear that he will continue discussions about decentralization and constitutional reform to also address the legitimate concerns, but this was a unilateral step. So these steps were taken by the Ukrainian Government, which we certainly commend them for these good-faith efforts, but naturally they need a partner in this effort.

QUESTION: Did they consult – did the – did President Poroshenko and his team consult with the United States before making this offer?

MS. PSAKI: Well --

QUESTION: Was it something that you put together with them?

MS. PSAKI: This was a plan put together by the Ukrainians. As you know, we and the European Union have been in consultations and discussions with them for months about the best way to de-escalate the situation on the ground.

QUESTION: Have you seen any reciprocal good-faith efforts from either Russia or the separatists?

MS. PSAKI: Nothing to update you on today, Matt. I think that's one of the reasons why a partner is needed. And Russia, of course, must support the peace plan instead of continuing to support the separatists on the ground.

QUESTION: So as far as you're concerned, they – there has not been any reciprocal good-faith action?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it just --

QUESTION: I know it's – but so far, you haven't seen anything, and so far what you have seen is a continuation of Russia being a bad actor? Is that --

MS. PSAKI: Well, there isn't any specific thing I'm pointing to at this moment. But I don't – I have not seen them speak out in support of this ceasefire either.

QUESTION: Okay. Would you also – would you be supportive of investigations into what has happened in the east specifically, I mean, what has been going on in the fighting, in the clashes, the bombings, the killings of journalists, et cetera?

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. I believe I spoke to this yesterday and said we would --

QUESTION: Little bit.

MS. PSAKI: -- certainly support an effort to look into what happened.

QUESTION: Not just with the journalists. I'm talking about everything writ large, not just the actions of the Ukrainian authorities and the Ukrainian security forces but also the separatists. I mean, is there any kind of a call for an investigation into what – would the U.S. be prepared to support an investigation by whatever body might be appropriate into the actual what happened on the – in the --

MS. PSAKI: Into – I'm not sure which specific --

QUESTION: Well, there's been a lot of fighting. There's been a number of civilian casualties on both sides. And I'm just wondering if this is something the U.S. feels should be investigated.

MS. PSAKI: Again, I mean, every day we make every effort, as do the Ukrainians and others, to obtain the most information we can in these circumstances. I'm not aware of a plan for or desire to call for a broad, sweeping investigation.

QUESTION: All right. Do you – yesterday you talked about how you were concerned about the movements of Russian troops inside Russia near the border. Is that still a concern, or is that gone away?

MS. PSAKI: I don't believe anything has changed on that front.

QUESTION: All right. And on the transfer of heavy weaponry and vehicles like tanks, still – you still haven't seen anything new since that one incident with the three tanks?

MS. PSAKI: Correct, mm-hmm.

QUESTION: But it remains – but you still – as you said yesterday, you still believe there is a lot of cross-border traffic and --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Just to go back to the ceasefire, I wondered what the thinking was behind not giving an immediate order for the unilateral ceasefire, one? He said that he could – or the Ukrainian officials are saying it could take place in a few days. Why not do it immediately?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are a range of steps I think they likely needed to prepare in order to implement it effectively from their end, so a couple of days is – obviously whatever they think is appropriate and possible is, of course – we support that – that process.

QUESTION: You don't have a timeline from here?

MS. PSAKI: No, I would point to them on what the specific implementation timeline is on their end.

Ukraine or any --

QUESTION: Sorry, just have there been – have there been any discussions between the Secretary and Foreign Minister Lavrov since --

MS. PSAKI: I don't believe --

QUESTION: -- or the Ukrainians?

MS. PSAKI: I don't believe there have been. I think he may speak with both sides in the coming days, but I don't – there hasn't been one since I came down here.

QUESTION: Both sides meaning the Ukrainians and the Russians?

MS. PSAKI: Correct, yes.

June 17, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: I'm wondering if you – if there have been any developments that either give you concern or give you hope that the situation is easing, number one. That's a very broad one. We'll start with that.

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are a couple of small developments over the last couple of days – or 24 hours. We would welcome President Poroshenko's statements yesterday noting he will continue to advance constitutional reform and address calls for early local elections in Donetsk and Luhansk to promote unity. There are – we've seen a range of reports of renewed Russian troop movements close to the Ukrainian border, and we're also closely monitoring that situation. But beyond that, I don't know if you have a specific question about a particular issue.

QUESTION: Well, on the political side, yeah, I mean, presumably you support his calls for the election and for – I think that he's proposing a new ceasefire or a new – something new. You are in favor of that?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly would be, yes.

QUESTION: Have you – has the Secretary been in touch with Foreign Minister Lavrov in the last day?

MS. PSAKI: Let me do a little check for you here, Matt.

QUESTION: I'm just wondering if you're seeing anything from the Russian side which would make you – which would lead you to believe that they are doing the right thing.

MS. PSAKI: He spoke with him on Saturday and we did a readout of that.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: There's not a new call since then.

QUESTION: Okay. Have you seen reports that two Russian journalists were killed by the Ukrainian army?

MS. PSAKI: We have seen those media reports. We don't have confirmation of the details or the cause. Some reports say they were badly injured, some say died while they were with a group of armed separatists during fighting in Luhansk. We would express our condolences, of course, to their families, call on all sides to ensure the safety of the media. But again, we don't have specific details on the circumstances.

QUESTION: Okay. And then yesterday I asked you about these comments that were made by both the prime minister and the foreign minister. Do you know – has anyone – have U.S. officials, maybe Ambassador Pyatt or someone, raised this at all, either the controversial comments with the Ukrainian officials, or is this just something that you're willing to let pass?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think I spoke to the context of one of the sets of comments yesterday, and the other I looked into after we talked about it. And the prime minister's comments have been misreported. He didn't call anyone "subhuman." What he said was that those supporting the militants destabilizing eastern Ukraine were inhuman, so it's slightly different. And he's referring specifically to the armed militants and certainly not Russians, as I understand the translation.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, I mean, they put it up on their website, the English translation. And it's been changed since, yes, but it did say those who support the separatists are subhuman, not inhuman. And so – and it was up until yesterday in that language. So anyway, but you're satisfied with it? I mean, you would have a problem with subhuman, yes, if this – if the prime minister was running around saying that Russians are subhuman? You would have a problem with that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think the accurate translation is a relevant point here.

QUESTION: Okay. So did you – you said that you – did the U.S. Government request some kind of clarification from the Ukrainians --

MS. PSAKI: No, I --

QUESTION: -- or are you just --

MS. PSAKI: No, I think that's just an important component here of the context of the comment.

QUESTION: Okay. But you would have a problem with the use of language like that, right? I mean, there is hyperbolic language on both sides, I recognize, and presumably you would call on both sides to keep the rhetoric down. Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: As we have. But I think our concern has been focused more naturally on the actions of the Russian separatists and the movement of military tanks and other equipment across the border.

QUESTION: Okay. And when you said that you had seen renewed – or signs of renewed activity, Russian military activity, that's on their – in Russia, right, but near the border?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. Close to the border. Exactly.

QUESTION: And is that cause for concern? Is it enough to be cause for concern?

MS. PSAKI: Well, that's something obviously that is certainly not our preference and it would be – it's something we're going to be watching closely and seeing what they do over the course of the coming days.

QUESTION: Right. But I mean, they are free – it is their country. I mean, they're free to have troops move around their own country, right, without --

MS. PSAKI: Correct. But if there's another buildup of troops on the border, certainly that would be a cause for concern.

QUESTION: Okay, and then last one. Have you seen since the incident with the tanks that you – the tanks and the rocket launchers that you talked about, have you seen more hardware, people going across the border into Ukraine, into eastern Ukraine from Russia?

MS. PSAKI: Well, it's become a daily occurrence but not along the same lines of what we talked about on Friday.

QUESTION: Jen --

QUESTION: I'm sorry, what does that mean?

MS. PSAKI: Meaning on Friday it was several Russian tanks.

QUESTION: So it's no – so it's – a daily occurrence is what? People and --

MS. PSAKI: Equipment, people crossing the border.

QUESTION: But not tanks?

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: Since that one --

MS. PSAKI: That I'm aware of that I've received an update on.

QUESTION: Jen, can I --

QUESTION: Is it movement toward the border or away from the border? I don't understand. On their side, but are they going back to where they were, let's say --

MS. PSAKI: Across the border from Russia into Ukraine. That was the area we expressed concern about on Friday.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: Jen, have you seen the reports that there was an explosion on one of the pipelines in Ukraine today? The interior minister says that one of the theories they're investigating is whether it was an act of terrorism. Do you have anything more concrete on it?

MS. PSAKI: We've seen the reports, as you mention, that an explosion has damaged a natural gas pipeline in central Ukraine. This pipeline transports Russian natural gas to Ukraine into countries in the EU. Both Gazprom and the Ukrainian Gas Transit Company report that this will not affect deliveries of gas. In terms of an update on the causes or the source, I don't have any additional information on that.

QUESTION: Did you get any – I was wondering if there was any kind of confirmation from the Russians following the call yesterday for them to return to negotiations, whether there'd been any update on that from your side. Has that been communicated to the Russian authorities in Moscow, and are they receptive or not?

MS. PSAKI: There hasn't been an update. We would reiterate our call for them to return to the negotiations. Obviously we think this is the right way to resolve the dispute over gas costs.

QUESTION: But still a stalemate as far as you're concerned?

MS. PSAKI: Correct.

QUESTION: And are you at all concerned that the Ukrainians are going to start running out of gas supplies? I know we've mentioned in the past there have been stockpiles, but are they going to --

MS. PSAKI: Our assessment is that they have adequate supplies from its own – they have adequate supplies from their own production and storage, and flows from European states can also help meet the demand. But obviously there is an urgency in moving back to these talks as well.

QUESTION: How long can they survive without the flows being reopened?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any set of days or weeks or months or anything like that, and I wouldn't want to give a prediction. They have a range of supplies they can tap into.

June 16, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: I wondered if you had a reaction to the news this morning that Russia has – that Gazprom has switched Ukraine to a prepayment system, which effectively cuts off all its gas supplies, because it hasn't forwarded any money to pay for the bill. And also there was today in Donetsk, some pro-Russian militia seized the central bank, and I just wondered if you had reactions to either of those two events.

MS. PSAKI: Well, on the first, they also, as you know, cut off negotiations as well. So we would call on Russia to rejoin the negotiations with Ukraine on natural gas supplies, which has been hosted by the EU. The European Commission is working with both parties to broker a commercially competitive compromise that addresses a market price in payment and payments. The EU in our view has put forward a fair and reasonable compromise that Ukraine has accepted, and we urge Russia to re-engage on this basis.

The oil as I understand it – or gas, I should say, continues to flow to Europe, which of course goes through Ukraine. But again, we believe that a conclusion of these talks and a resumption of the talks is the necessary step forward.

On the second question on Donetsk, I had not – can you repeat to me again what --

QUESTION: Yeah. There were some pro-Russian militias who seized the central bank in Donetsk today, and I'm just wondering if you – how you feel that's going to affect the efforts by the Ukrainian authorities to try and regain control.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I had not talked to our team about that specific incident. Obviously, we've been concerned, and I think it would be the case here about the steps by Russian separatists in Donetsk and other areas of eastern Ukraine. That would be no different here. There are steps Russia can take, including calling on separatists to lay down their arms and securing the border, and obviously we haven't seen a great deal of progress on that front.

QUESTION: Jen, over the weekend, there were a couple instances – well, two instances that I'm aware of: One with the Ukrainian – involving the Ukrainian prime minister, who is someone who has had a great deal of interaction with the U.S., and also the foreign minister who has also had a great deal of action with the U.S., making some rather interesting, to say the least, strident comments. The prime minister referred to Russians who are – Russia and Russians who are supporting the separatists as sub-human. Is that something that you guys would agree with? Is it something that you're concerned about?

MS. PSAKI: Well, those --

QUESTION: Is it the kind of language that you would expect from an ally of the United States? And the foreign minister called President Putin something that I can't even say here in the briefing room.

MS. PSAKI: Come on, Matt, you want to. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: No. I'm not going to take the – I'll let you if you'd like to.

MS. PSAKI: No, thank you. I will refrain from that.

QUESTION: But maybe you would like to repeat it. Maybe you agree with it. I don't know.

MS. PSAKI: I will refrain from that.

QUESTION: Is this the kind of --

MS. PSAKI: Let me – let me – let me --

QUESTION: Is this the kind of language coming from – this isn't – these are officials who you guys have supported, and I just want to know. Do you – I mean, this is something – is this kind of language acceptable?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think one piece here that's incredibly important is to remind you and everybody what the foreign minister was doing when he made those comments. And he was – he went to the Russian Embassy, he personally went to the Russian Embassy in order to calm the protestors and succeeded in doing so. That was where he was. He's been encouraging calm, encouraging a peaceful resolution, and I would otherwise point you to the Ukrainians on the meaning of the language used. But I think the context here of what effort he was undergoing is an incredibly important part.

QUESTION: So you don't think that kind of language is inflammatory from the foreign minister's – from the foreign minister's language, his comment, you don't think that's inflammatory at all?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, again you're familiar with the words we use and don't use, but I think the context of what he was trying to accomplish there is important here.

QUESTION: Okay. All right. Well, comments made and whatever in that kind of context when you're out, so you're at a – trying to calm things down, if that's, in fact, what he was doing, which I don't have any reason to doubt, that's one thing.

But the prime minister's reference to Russians as being subhuman was actually posted in English on their – on the Embassy website here. One of the complaints or one of the accusations that the Russians have made about these guys in Ukraine is that they are very right-winged, that they're fascists, that they're Nazi kind of – and this kind of language just – it would appear to speak to it. Are you okay with them using words like "subhuman" to describe the Russians?

MS. PSAKI: I think – Matt, look, I think the prime minister’s behavior and his leadership has been pretty consistently in support of a peaceful resolution to the circumstances on the ground, protections for individuals including Russians across eastern Ukraine, and I think I would encourage anyone to look at that as evidence of how he feels.

QUESTION: So you’re not – you don’t think that it warrants any kind of condemnation or any kind of – you don’t think he should rethink – not use that kind of language? Because it is inflammatory, I mean – right?

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to the Ukrainians for that, but again, I would remind everyone of the behavior and the support for a peaceful and calm resolution to the conflict.

QUESTION: Okay. So now quite apart from those two – those things, the Secretary had a phone call with Foreign Minister Lavrov on Saturday, or was it Sunday? I can’t remember now.

MS. PSAKI: It was on Saturday.

QUESTION: On Saturday.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Since that conversation in which he basically repeated the kinds of things that you guys have said before – stop supporting the separatists; stop the flows of heavy weaponry, including tanks – have you seen anything to suggest that they are heeding that advice or those calls, or do you still see movement of heavy weapons – the Stalin’s organs and tanks across –

MS. PSAKI: Well, we’ve seen – there’s been movement that’s been on a daily basis for some time, but we haven’t seen a new incident that is as significant as the one on Friday over the course of the last couple of days.

QUESTION: Okay. So do you think that that is – I mean, is that a positive sign? Is that encouraging or --

MS. PSAKI: Again, I think there have been movements over the border on nearly a daily basis, so there’s more that can be done to put an end to that.

QUESTION: Jen --

QUESTION: And are you aware of any recent contact between – more recent than Saturday between the Secretary and Foreign Minister Lavrov or other senior people?

MS. PSAKI: No, they haven’t – they have not – the Secretary has not spoken with the foreign minister since then unless it’s happened in the last 45 minutes, which I don’t think it was planned to, so --

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: Hey, Jen, one more on the tanks. Do you – is it your understanding – and you may not know, in which case I would ask if you could take the question --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- but the -- fundamentally the question is the Russian tanks that you've seen cross from Russia into Ukraine, do you believe those tanks to be staffed by Russian military, or do you believe that they are staffed by somebody else and they've sort of been given or lent to the pro-Russian forces on the other side?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think you all saw our statement we put out on Friday about the fact that we believe these are Russian tanks. I don't have that level of detail. I'm happy to follow up and see if we do.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: But when you say --

QUESTION: Can we go to --

QUESTION: When you said that they were Russian tanks that are no longer used by the Russian army, but they were housed in southwestern Russia and moved somehow, driven by --

QUESTION: Someone.

QUESTION: -- someone into Ukraine, and that the reports of them having been stolen from the Ukrainians by the separatists are incorrect, as far as you know?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Right?

MS. PSAKI: That's correct, yes.

QUESTION: That stays the same?

MS. PSAKI: Yes, absolutely.

June 13, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC

MS. HARF: During the Normandy commemoration and the Vice President's visit to Kyiv, we made clear that we support President Poroshenko's peace plan. This includes a ceasefire, amnesty for separatists to lay down their arms, safe conduct for Russian fighters back to Russia, and broad decentralization of authority to Ukraine's region.

We and our European allies have encouraged Russia to support the peace plan and to cooperate with President Poroshenko in its implementation, and we were gratified that Presidents Poroshenko and Putin have spoken. At the same time, however, we are highly concerned by new Russian efforts to support the separatists.

In the last three days, a convoy of three T-64 tanks, several BM-21 or Grad multiple rocket launchers, and other military vehicles crossed from Russia into Ukraine near the Ukrainian town of Snizhne. This is unacceptable. Poroshenko protested this action yesterday with President Putin, and Secretary Kerry raised our concerns with Foreign Minister Lavrov on Wednesday as well.

Ukrainian and Russian negotiators will be meeting again this weekend in Kyiv to discuss the peace plan's implementation. We call on Russia to use this opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to peace, to stop weapons and fighters from crossing into Ukraine, and to cooperate with Ukraine in the peace plan's implementation. A failure by Russia to de-escalate the situation will lead to additional costs.

...

QUESTION: Can we go back to Ukraine? There were reports yesterday that on these three tanks that you were talking about, which you said was an escalation. There were reports that these in fact were Ukrainian tanks that had been kind of ripped off by the separatists.

MS. HARF: Nope.

QUESTION: You have convincing evidence --

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: -- or whatever, that they were --

MS. HARF: They have acquired heavy weapons and military equipment from Russia, including Russian tanks. Yes.

QUESTION: Well – but these three tanks were driven across the border --

MS. HARF: Yes, yes.

QUESTION: -- from -- okay.

MS. HARF: They were somehow pulled out of the Russian warehouses, someone taught them how to use them, and they were sent from Russia to Ukraine.

QUESTION: So you don't buy the stolen from the Ukrainians ?

MS. HARF: Nope, not at all.

QUESTION: Definitely Russian tanks? Okay.

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: The other thing on this is that apparently there was an incursion the other way, Ukrainians going in – crossing – Ukrainian military going into Russia, to which the Russians are very upset about. Do you have anything to say about that?

MS. HARF: Do you know where that was?

QUESTION: I don't specifically know where it was, but it was today.

QUESTION: It was today.

MS. HARF: I don't have any confirmation of that.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: I'm happy to check.

QUESTION: And then last night --

MS. HARF: I would be surprised, but I'm happy to check.

QUESTION: Well, I think they've admit – the Ukrainians have admitted it.

MS. HARF: I'm happy to check.

QUESTION: They said it was an accident --

MS. HARF: Yep.

QUESTION: -- or something like that.

MS. HARF: I'll check.

QUESTION: But anyway, the Russians are not too happy.

Anyway, last night --

MS. HARF: I don't think the Russians have a leg to stand on here, but go ahead.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, regardless, yesterday, I had asked Jen about these reports of phosphorus -- use of phosphorus, and late in the evening or in the evening, she put out a statement saying you had no evidence --

MS. HARF: No evidence.

QUESTION: -- to back that up. Does that mean that you believe that the pictures and the video that's circulating are fake?

MS. HARF: We have no evidence to back it up.

QUESTION: But --

MS. HARF: None.

QUESTION: -- have you sought evidence?

MS. HARF: Of course, if we get reports like this, we look at the evidence and see if we think it's legitimate. We just don't have any evidence here that we think is credible.

QUESTION: Okay. And it -- the statement also said that it was -- it noted that the Ukrainians have --

MS. HARF: Has denied the rumor.

QUESTION: So you -- this is a rumor? This is more misinformation coming from the Russian propaganda?

MS. HARF: We have no evidence to back it up, Matt. I don't know where it's coming from or why, but we have no evidence to back it up.

QUESTION: Right. But when you say that, does that mean you've gone to the --

MS. HARF: We've looked into it.

QUESTION: You or someone have gone to the -- can you explain what looking into it means?

MS. HARF: No. We've looked into it through a variety of ways and we have no evidence to back it up.

Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Thanks.

June 12, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: On Ukraine, there's been reports recently that three tanks have crossed the Russian border into Ukraine. I was wondering if you had any confirmation. And if proven true, would this be a step that warrants further sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: I think I do have something on this. Unfortunately, I'm not sure I have it with me, so why don't we get that to you and anyone else who's interested after the briefing.

...

QUESTION: And just – do you remember at all what it was? Is it a confirmation?

MS. PSAKI: Again, I think it's probably sitting on my desk right now and it came out right before the briefing --

QUESTION: All right.

MS. PSAKI: -- so let me – we'll venture to get that out to all of you shortly after the briefing.

QUESTION: There were reports yesterday that the Ukrainian military is using phosphorus – white phosphorus bombs and attacking Slovyansk. Do you know anything about that? Did that come up in the conversation between Secretary Kerry and Foreign Minister Lavrov, if there was one last night?

MS. PSAKI: There was one yesterday. And actually I did find what I wanted to say on the vehicles, so let me to get to that after I get to Matt's questions, so thank you for your patience.

QUESTION: Well, you can start with the tanks.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. We've seen the media reports that three Russian tanks and other military vehicles may have crossed the border into eastern Ukraine in the border town of Snizhnye. We have long condemned the flow of Russian fighters and arms into Ukraine as destabilizing and a violation of Russia's Geneva commitments. If these latest reports are true, which I don't have confirmation of, this incursion marks a serious and disturbing escalation of the crisis in eastern Ukraine.

As you know, there are a range of factors we look at as it relates to consequences. I don't have anything to outline on that front at this point in time.

Your question – I'm sorry – was about --

QUESTION: About the phone call --

MS. PSAKI: -- the use of phosphorus.

QUESTION: -- and about phosphorus.

MS. PSAKI: The Secretary did speak with Foreign Minister Lavrov just yesterday afternoon. They discussed two issues: the ongoing situation on the ground and Ukraine. They did not talk about that specific issue. The Secretary encouraged Foreign Minister Lavrov to encourage President Putin to directly engage with President Poroshenko. We've seen reports that they had a phone call today. He also encouraged that conversation or engagement to focus on de-escalating the situation on the ground, and he called on Russia to halt the flow of militants and arms from Russia into eastern Ukraine, which is clearly relevant in this case.

They also discussed Syria's chemical weapons program. The Secretary made clear that there's no excuse for failing to turn over the remaining 8 percent and asked for Foreign Minister Lavrov's assistance in putting additional pressure on the Syrian regime.

QUESTION: Even though it didn't come up in their conversation, do you have anything to say about the reports that he used phosphorous? There's some pretty -- there's some -- what appears to be video and photographic evidence of this -- of the use of this.

MS. PSAKI: Of the -- by the Russian --

QUESTION: No, by the Ukrainians.

MS. PSAKI: I have not seen those reports. I'm happy to check with our team and see if we have any confirmation of that or more to say on that front.

QUESTION: All right. And the Russians, do you -- are you supportive of the -- excuse me -- of the resolution at the Security Council that they're preparing or may have already introduced?

MS. PSAKI: We haven't -- they haven't yet shared to my knowledge, or when I came down here, a text -- a UN Security Council resolution text. Our view is that the focus should be on engaging directly with the Ukrainians. We find it hypocritical for the Russian leadership to call for an end to violence or call on the Ukrainians to take these steps when Russian separatists are abetting the violence and bringing weapons illegally into the country. But we haven't yet seen the text of what they're proposing.

QUESTION: But you do think that the violence should end, correct?

MS. PSAKI: Of course we do. But again --

QUESTION: Well, I don't understand why it's hypocritical for them to say that they want an end.

MS. PSAKI: Because I think it depends on what the text is calling for, and if it's focused on Ukrainians taking steps, that is clearly different from what the reality is on the ground.

QUESTION: Well, what if it's – I mean, what if it was both sides? What if the text said both sides should end the violence?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we'll --

QUESTION: Then you would support it?

MS. PSAKI: We'll see what the text says and then we can do some more analysis.

QUESTION: All right. And then the last thing is if the reports of the Poroshenko-Putin call are correct, if they're accurate, is that a good – is that a positive step, in your mind?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. We would be encouraged by direct engagement, but clearly there's more that needs to be done beyond that. It's a step in the process, but there's more that needs to happen.

June 10, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine
Washington, DC

QUESTION: I wondered if you had any reaction to the announcement today by the new President Poroshenko to set up humanitarian corridors in the east, and whether you felt that's – think this is going to be helpful in bringing an end to the fighting in that part of the country.

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you heard President Poroshenko say, I believe, in his announcement, their goal here is to explore options to remove civilians from harm's way as it continues to maintain the safety of its citizens as its top priority. And we are encouraging them with this or any other related effort to work closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other international organizations to plan for any internally displaced persons and how to address that. But certainly, we support their effort to protect their citizens.

QUESTION: Do you believe this is a prelude to an even tougher response by the Ukrainian armed forces against the separatists?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you've seen even overnight, armed separatists are increasingly – or have increasingly attacked Ukrainian security personnel. I shouldn't say "increasingly." I should say there's still ongoing attacks against Ukrainian security personnel overnight in Luhansk and Kramatorsk. And we have long felt – and this is a message the Secretary conveyed to President Poroshenko last week – that the Ukrainians, Ukrainian Government, has every right to take steps to promote calm and stability on the ground.

Now, as you know, we – there have been discussions between the parties, between President Poroshenko and President Putin, and that was encouraging. But there's more that the Russians need to do, more they need to – more actions they need to take to follow up their commitments. And in the meantime, the Ukrainians have a responsibility to maintain law and order in their own country.

QUESTION: So this could be a prelude to a further intensification of the Ukrainian Government's efforts to defend its country?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I certainly don't want to predict that, and that's not our hope, and I don't think that's their hope. But again, they are dealing with a range of armed separatists on the ground who are posing a threat to the safety and security of their own people, and they have every right to maintain law and order on the ground.

QUESTION: And when you were saying that you were urging them to work with the UNHCR, do you have any figures on the number of people they might be thinking of moving?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have that. Obviously this announcement was just made today. I'd refer you to them for any more specifics on that.

QUESTION: What kind of actions should the Russians take? I mean, you said they should take more action to ensure the stability of Ukraine. Like what?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I would say -- I would say, Said, that in addition to engaging directly with the Ukrainians, which has only just begun, and there's more that needs to be -- do -- to happen. President Putin made -- stated, I think, over the last couple of days that he will take actions to secure the border between Russia and Ukraine more effectively to prevent the flow of armed fighters and weapons. And we haven't seen steps taken to that -- to address that. That's an incredibly important component of what's happening on the ground and one that has raised a great deal of concern.

QUESTION: But you also like to see some diplomatic gestures such as --

MS. PSAKI: Well, I mentioned --

QUESTION: -- recognizing and raising --

MS. PSAKI: I mentioned direct engagement. That was the first thing I stated.

...

QUESTION: I understand there's not an agreement yet on -- or there's been a failure to come to agreement between Russia and Kyiv on the oil loans --

MS. PSAKI: Oil. Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- and the prices. So I'm wondering, what's your understanding of how much longer these discussions are going to continue?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we understand they're ongoing. I can't make a prediction, obviously. We're not a party of the discussions. It's the EU, Ukraine, and Russia. And we support these talks and believe that they're the appropriate forum to negotiate price and supply issues. But again, I can't make a prediction. I know there have been some updates from the relevant parties on the ground, but obviously we encourage a conclusion would be a positive step, of course.

QUESTION: Right. I mean, they keep pushing this deadline for the threat for the loans to be called in down the road, and so I'm just kind of wondering if this is just going to continue for some period of time, or whether we should expect for the hard and fast deadline to take place.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I wish I could make a prediction for you. Obviously, all parties have a stake here; certainly the Ukrainians have a stake in providing the necessary resources to their people. Three-fourths of Russia's gas exports go to Europe, so Russia depends on gas exports to its

western and European neighbors as well. So again, I can't make a prediction of what the outcome will be. We're not a party to the negotiations as much as we support them.

June 9, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine
Washington, DC

QUESTION: So President Poroshenko was sworn in over the weekend and he has laid out various statements about how he sees things going forward. There's two sets of talks happening with the Russians today, one in Brussels on the gas, and they were trying to have some talks as well about the uprising in the east. And President Poroshenko has said that we must end the fighting by this week. How realistic do you believe that comment is?

MS. HARF: Well, we know the fighting needs to end soon. And we were encouraged that President Putin spoke with President Poroshenko in Normandy on Friday, that Russia returned its ambassador to Ukraine for its inauguration, and we would welcome President Putin's comments that he will take action to secure the border between Russia and Ukraine more effectively to prevent the flow of armed fighters and weapons. And I think now we're calling on Russia to follow up its words with actions.

So I think there's a path forward here, we've always said there was, for de-escalation. We have congratulated President Poroshenko on his inauguration and welcome the commitments he's made to increasingly work to secure his country, which has been under such brutal attack for way too long now.

QUESTION: Is it possible, though, to stop these brutal attacks in the east this week?

MS. HARF: President Putin called on the separatists, many of whom are being supported by the Russians, to do so. I think we could see significant progress.

QUESTION: You do think there – significant progress this week?

MS. HARF: I think we could.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MS. HARF: Let's put our actions where our words are.

QUESTION: If the plan was to isolate President Putin, what was he doing at the G7 conference to begin with?

MS. HARF: Well, he was in Normandy for the 70th anniversary celebration of D-Day. You know the long history, particularly during World War II, we had working with Russia, and we believe this is a historical event that didn't need to have politics in it. We've also been very clear that the G7 is the G7 and not the G8 right now.

June 6, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Secretary Kerry, when he spoke with Prime Minister Poroshenko, said that he wanted him, according to reports, that he wanted him to put forward more evidence with regard to possible Russian involvement in eastern Ukraine. Does that mean that there isn't really hard evidence at this point, in spite of the fact that statements are made time and time again that Russia is involved in this?

MS. HARF: Not at all. I think there is a great deal of hard evidence that Russia is involved – deeply involved – with the separatists. We have long seen credible reports of Russian soldiers operating without insignia in Ukraine, as they first did in March in occupied Crimea. In recent weeks, there have been a number of videos and media reports of armed militants admitting they came from Russia, including a number of Chechens who openly admit they came from Russia. The militants are heavily armed, appear – excuse me – to be professionally trained and in combat operations, again, of the sort that Russia does.

So again, the Ukrainian Government has also reported that there are daily a number of convoys attempting every day to cross from the Russian side into the Ukrainian side. These signs all point to Russia attempting to destabilize.

QUESTION: Well, the question is, however: Is this the government doing this, or are these individuals who are concerned? There have been relationships between the Ukrainians and Russian-Ukrainians and Russian-Russians --

MS. HARF: No.

QUESTION: -- for decades --

MS. HARF: No.

QUESTION: -- centuries. Those relationships exist.

MS. HARF: I understand the history, but what I'm not – focused on is the history of the facts. And what the facts tell us, from a variety of sources and a variety of ways, is the Russian Government is heavily involved in perpetrating and encouraging what we've seen in eastern Ukraine and in Crimea for a variety of reasons. We've seen it from the arms they have. They've openly admitted it, some people on camera. And if they were going to help Ukraine get a more stable future, we want the Russian Government to use their influence to pull these separatists back, to continue pulling their troops back, and to give the Ukrainians a better future.

QUESTION: Why then does Secretary Kerry need more evidence?

MS. HART: I don't think you're accurately characterizing his conversation with President-elect Poroshenko.

Yeah. Just a couple more.

QUESTION: Did you put a readout yesterday on the Secretary's meeting with Lavrov (inaudible)?

MS. HART: I gave – did it at the top of the briefing. That was the only readout we had, was that quick readout at the top of the briefing.

QUESTION: Yeah, but you didn't say what issues they talked about.

MS. HART: I – let's go back and check the transcript. I gave a little bit of detail.

QUESTION: All right.

June 5, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Would the United States support calls for an investigation of alleged use of military aviation for bombings on the Ukrainian cities? We talked about it in the previous days you talked that you don't have information on that. I'm referring to such alleged bombings in Luhansk which had led to civilian casualties and alleged use of bomb plot units and the military seizure of Slovyansk and other alleged crimes.

...

MS. HARF: So I think – and I – look, I've gotten a lot of questions on this over the past few days, and yesterday I did a little bit of – we have no credible evidence to back up any reports about human rights violations by the Ukrainian Government. I also think that it's really unacceptable to try to draw moral equivalence here between a country defending itself and its people and its buildings and its land and its territory from armed separatists backed by another government who are trying to sow chaos. There is just not an equivalence here, and to try to equate them I think is just fundamentally misreading the situation.

June 4, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Russia/Ukraine
Washington, DC

QUESTION: Great. Thanks. So first off, just to follow up on that, he'll be meeting with Lavrov? What is the topic?

MS. HARF: I'm imagining they're going to be discussing a range of topics, most importantly Ukraine.

QUESTION: Ukraine. Okay. So that's where I wanted to go.

MS. HARF: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: I'm sure you've seen the reports out of Luhansk about the separatists overrunning two government bases there. I see that, in his comments with President Poroshenko today, President Obama discussed additional assistance for law enforcement, and – assuming that's a civilian law enforcement or police force, because he made the distinction between military forces and civil – law enforcement?

MS. HARF: It's a little of both, I think. So let me just detail a little bit of it, and then we can --

QUESTION: Great.

MS. HARF: -- go into that more. So the White House, as you know, today announced \$5 million in new security assistance. This new assistance will go for night vision devices, body armor, and additional communications equipment. It's my understanding that's going to the Ministry of Defense, actually.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: And that, obviously, adds to what we've already given, which is 23 million in total, including the last 5 million. Fifteen million has gone to the ministry of defense, and 8 million has gone to the State Border Guard Service.

QUESTION: Okay. He did make the distinction between law enforcement and also military troops. He talked about the night vision goggles for the military forces. I'm just wondering if there's anything else that might be going for law enforcement forces in some of the eastern regions.

MS. HARF: I can check. I don't have any more additional details. I know they put out a fact sheet as well, but we can see if there's anything else. And we continue to evaluate requests from the Government of Ukraine.

QUESTION: Okay. What do you make of this new offensive by the separatists?

MS. HARF: Well, I would say a few points. Look, the first is – and I have a little bit on this. Just give me one second. We have – in addition to what you mentioned, noted that Ukraine's operations in some of those regions you mentioned have also entered a new and more active phase. So we have said all along that the Ukrainians have shown remarkable restraint in the face of unacceptable Russian-backed aggression, but that they do have a responsibility and a duty to protect their citizens. That's why you've seen us continue to support them, like some of the ways I just talked about.

So the situation on the ground is obviously fluid and fast-moving, but we have repeatedly throughout this called on the Russians to use their influence with the separatists, to ask them to cease what they're doing, to stop taking government buildings, to stop their offensives. And have yet have not seen any movement in that area, but hope we will.

QUESTION: Are the Ukraine forces still referring to this – or the government still referring to this as a counterterrorism operation, or --

MS. HARF: I can check on the exact wording they're using.

QUESTION: Okay. I mean, I know there was some discussion earlier about whether or not that was an appropriate term to use when we we're talking about – I mean, whether or not they're backed by Russians, they're still Ukraine citizens, no?

MS. HARF: Well, some of them.

QUESTION: Some of them at least.

MS. HARF: Right. So some of them certainly are Ukrainian, some of them are from other places, as we've seen in the press. But look, in terms what word we use, I think that's less important, quite frankly, here than the fact that we've said the Ukrainians have a responsibility and an obligation to protect their citizens, all of their citizens in all of their regions, including all of the parts of the east, and that the Russians should use their influence with these groups, whatever we want to call them, to pull back.

QUESTION: Thank you.

...

QUESTION: Now, you are saying that you want the Russians to use their influence with the separatists. The Russians want you to use your influence with the Ukrainian Government. They're saying that they should – you should use your influence to stop attacks.

MS. HARF: That the Ukrainian Government should stop defending its own territory?

QUESTION: Okay. So --

MS. HART: See, that's a false logic on the Russian part, though, Said.

QUESTION: Okay. All right. So everything that the Ukrainians are doing, I just want to understand your position correctly -- everything that they are doing is actually self-defense, correct?

MS. HART: They're -- I mean, look, I mean, I don't want to use the term self-defense, but this is Ukrainian territory that they are defending --

QUESTION: They defend -- right.

MS. HART: -- from incursions from people that are backed by another government, and in the case of Crimea actually was annexed by another government.

QUESTION: Okay, so --

MS. HART: So it's not one-to-one.

QUESTION: Okay. You just preempted my next question, which is they -- what about Crimea? Does it fall under that? Ukrainian?

MS. HART: Still part of Ukraine.

QUESTION: Okay. Now -- and a quick follow-up: You're saying that they are -- some of them are Russians, suggesting that some or maybe many are not Russian. Do you have any percentage or breakdown?

MS. HART: Well, I said some are Ukrainians.

QUESTION: Right. I'm saying, are some of them --

MS. HART: Well, any percentages? I can check with our folks and see. I don't know if we have that kind of clarity.

QUESTION: I mean, some of the ethnic Russians are Ukrainian citizens; some are not.

MS. HART: Uh-huh. We've seen some Chechens recently. We've seen others. So --

QUESTION: Okay, and that's my last question. Are you -- because the charge was made last week that some Chechen fighters were being sort of ferried by the Russians across the border to go and fight in Crimea. Do you have any more details on that?

MS. HART: Well, I mean, without a doubt, we have seen the numerous reports now that armed Chechen fighters have traveled from Russia, particularly to Donetsk, to support the Russian-

backed separatists. How they get there I think we're still looking for more details on, but there's no question that we've seen some go there. And I don't have more details for you on that right now.

QUESTION: So Marie --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- the U.S. isn't concerned that some of the actions by the Ukrainian forces, particularly in places like Luhansk, are excessive? We see numbers of deaths on the part on the sides of the rebels. You're not worried that some of that is excessive actions?

MS. HARF: So I think I'd make three points here. The first is that in any armed conflict, there are going to be casualties on each side, right? Here, we have not seen any credible reports of things like human rights violations by the Ukrainian Government. There are a variety of reports out there. Obviously, it takes some time to run these down on the ground. I don't want to rule it out completely, but we as of this point haven't seen credible reports of the kind of human rights violations or things like you mentioned.

...

QUESTION: I mean, at a certain point it was an issue raised about -- that Ukraine is going to be -- is at the edge of a civil war. You still looking that way, or just --

MS. HARF: We don't look at it that way, because a civil war would imply that there are factions inside a country fighting each other. This is a situation where you have a country with an outside force that's doing -- that's encouraging the fighting in some cases, like in Crimea, annexing it themselves, so that's not a civil war; that's another country messing around in its neighbor's internal politics, which just a different thing.

QUESTION: And one of the things that you were pushing with the Ukrainian Government, or at least we call it the government of Kyiv at that point, you -- the issue --

MS. HARF: I think you can call it the Ukrainian Government.

QUESTION: Okay. (Laughter.) Or Ukrainian Government --

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: So it was asked -- they were asked to make some modifications or whatever, the inclusiveness of the separatists or the pro-Russian entities, whatever, it was -- it is still push this issue or --

MS. HARF: Are you talking about the constitutional reform process?

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. HART: Okay.

QUESTION: That – the term that you are using.

MS. HART: Uh-huh. Yeah. So obviously, they've said they're committed to that. President-elect Poroshenko, who the President met with today – Secretary Kerry did as well – these are things that he is going to, as he moves forward with his government, will be dealing with. They've said they're committed to it.

QUESTION: So the --

MS. HART: And we do believe it's an important process.

QUESTION: What's your understanding of what are the main challenges now facing Ukraine? Is the separatist movement or the economic crisis or the presence of Russian troops at the borders, or it's not there anymore?

MS. HART: Well, on the Russian troops, we've said they've been slowly moving back from the border, so obviously we believe they need to move quickly. But we have noted, in terms of the troops on the border, that they have been – many of them have moved, many of them have made preparations to move. They are moving slowly, but they're working on that.

President-elect Poroshenko himself announced, I think, right after his election, that his number one priority after taking office will be to restore order in eastern Ukraine by increasing dialogue with citizens of that region, traveling to the area soon after his inauguration, and increasing the transparency of the ongoing constitutional reform process.

So I think there are a couple challenges, right? Ukraine is coming out of a time when it had a leadership that stripped its citizens of money and rights and ways to choose their own government, and that's why you saw the Ukrainians come out and say that's not okay and we want a new government.

So they have some economic challenges, certainly, which is why we've said we think it's important to support them economically. There is a huge security challenge, too, and I think President-elect Poroshenko is focused on that.

QUESTION: Marie --

QUESTION: Marie, how do you differentiate between this not being seen as a civil war in Ukraine, even though, as you just said, there are some Ukraine separatists – some of the separatists are at least are Ukrainian fighting against their government – and a situation like Syria, which I think the State Department, the Administration --

MS. HART: Yeah, yeah.

QUESTION: -- everybody acknowledges is a civil war --

MS. HARF: There wasn't --

QUESTION: -- when there are also outside forces?

MS. HARF: That's true. The difference, I would say, is in Ukraine there was no violence before outside forces intervened. So in Syria, you had a situation where the government -- Syrians rose up.

QUESTION: Except in, like, Maidan and places like that.

MS. HARF: But there -- that wasn't civil war-level violence, no. That was internal -- it was things like we've seen elsewhere around the Arab world, for example. It was people rising up against their government. The government cracked down, and eventually the government fled. That's not -- we wouldn't term that a civil war.

In Syria, when we started calling it a civil war, right, is when you had this local opposition rise up against the government, the government puts them down, and the armed opposition emerges, and there truly is a Syrian-on-Syrian civil war raging throughout all of Syria, basically.

And in Ukraine, there was no military-to-military level or style of violence. I mean, what happened on the Maidan was an uprising and the government putting it down violently.

QUESTION: Okay, but couldn't you also argue that --

MS. HARF: There was no large-scale violence like we've seen until the Russians started messing around there.

QUESTION: Okay, but you could -- one, I guess, could also argue that so much -- so many regions of Ukraine at this point are fighting.

MS. HARF: A majority of Ukraine is still completely calm and violence-free -- completely calm and violence-free. That's why you saw with the elections a large, vast majority of the country go ahead to vote totally peacefully and freely.

So I -- actually, in terms of where the fighting's occurring, it really is in a very limited area, which again --

QUESTION: But that would -- that could also include Crimea, could it not?

MS. HARF: Right. Still very limited. But again, there was no violent -- I mean, you can talk about the violence in the square, but that's a different kind of violence than we talk about with a civil war and that we talk about with what we've seen in Ukraine.

QUESTION: The upcoming talks between Secretary Kerry and Foreign Minister Lavrov.

MS. HARF: Yes.

QUESTION: Are you hoping that there may be some kind of way of resolving this? We've seen some troops move back – not all of them – but some move – troops move back from the eastern borders – two-thirds, you said. I wonder if you sort of see that there's some chink, some possibility of an opening?

MS. HARF: I mean, we hope so, right? I don't want to get ahead of a meeting that hasn't happened or be overly optimistic. We obviously have always said there was a diplomatic off-ramp here, and that that's why we were going to keep talking with the Russians. And if we can make some progress tomorrow, that would be great.

QUESTION: What would constitute progress for you?

MS. HARF: I think we'll wait and see.

QUESTION: Are there any carrots being offered in these talks? Is the Secretary going to come offer some kind of – I don't know --

MS. HARF: Well --

QUESTION: -- olive branch or opening or --

MS. HARF: I don't have anything to preview specifically about what he'll say. But what we've said, broadly speaking, is that we have put a lot of pressure on the Russian economy, and that pressure will increase if we don't see changes. And so I think the Russians know that they have a choice to make to continue with the actions and have more pressure, or to do the opposite.

QUESTION: So you're talking about there could be an easing of the sanctions on the table if certain actions are taken by Moscow?

MS. HARF: Well, I think I was probably saying the opposite: that if certain actions aren't taken, there will be more sanctions.

QUESTION: More sanctions.

MS. HARF: But no, I haven't heard anyone talking about easing of sanctions. But again, like, that's – eventually we would like to get to a place where we could do something like that. But we haven't seen any indication that will be possible.

QUESTION: So is it purely coincidental, then, today that Germany's just come out – warned again of – warned that there could be tougher sanctions against Russia?

MS. HARF: We've certainly been linked up with the EU. I know people think we haven't been, but we've been linked up with the EU and all the countries quite closely on this, and it's not

coincidental. Look, I think we're all talking about the fact that there could be more.

June 3, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson
Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine
Washington, DC

QUESTION: The OSCE confirmed that the explosion at the Luhansk city administration was indeed an airstrike. Civilians died there. And Kyiv has so far denied responsibility for that incident. Who do you believe?

MS. HARF: This is the June 2nd incident?

QUESTION: On Tuesday, the OSCE --

MS. HARF: There are conflicting reports about this.

QUESTION: Who do you believe more, the OSCE or Kyiv?

MS. HARF: Well, we're still looking into it. There are conflicting reports about this. I actually hadn't seen an OSCE statement, so let me check on that. And of course, in general, welcome the restraint the Government of Ukraine has shown in the face of overwhelming and unacceptable Russian interference and see no credible evidence to the contrary.

...

QUESTION: Very, very quickly to clarify something: Did you say you were looking into what happened on June 2nd in Luhansk?

MS. HARF: I said there are conflicting reports about what happened. We don't have all the facts. Some reports indicate an accident with -- here, this is a little more I didn't give you. Some reports indicate an accident with a separatist-fired MANPAD may have caused the deaths. And then I said we welcome the restraint shown by the Government of Ukraine.

QUESTION: Thank you.

June 2, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on the Ukraine
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: Do you have any thoughts on the UN Security Council resolution the Russians are planning to bring on Ukraine? And then secondly, do you have any thoughts about the attack in Luhansk today, the initial – the attack, and then the response?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. Well, let me first say on the proposal, the UN proposal, it is hypocritical of the Russian leadership to call for an end to violence and the creation of humanitarian corridors when, at the same time, armed irregular forces are entering Ukraine from Russia, weapons are being brought illegally from Russia into Ukraine, Russian-backed separatists are attacking new targets and holding OSCE monitoring teams hostage, and Russia is doing nothing to stop these activities. So if they are going to call for or would support a reduction in tensions and a de-escalation, it would be more effective for them to end those activities.

QUESTION: But --

MS. PSAKI: And the second question, sorry, was about the events in Luhansk.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. PSAKI: Well, the reports just came out, I think, right before we – I came down here related to – I'm not sure why I'm up on the screen; that's a lot of me. (Laughter.) They came out right before we came down here. We're still seeking information. I know there have been conflicting reports about who was responsible. So I'll have to check with our team on that.

Go ahead.

QUESTION: Right. Well, not only conflicting reports, but I mean, there's a lot of photographic evidence – or photographs out there which really seem to show quite severe destruction and civilian – at least what appear to be civilians death. Are you still at this moment – not having the details of this specific incident, though, but do you stand by your previous – what you have said previously, which is that you don't particularly have any concerns about the actions of the Ukrainian authorities in --

MS. PSAKI: We do, and I also said --

QUESTION: You do have concerns?

MS. PSAKI: No. We do stand by it, but I will look in – we will look into these. I know that it happened right before I came out here.

May 30, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: There were Russian reports that there was a call between the Secretary and Foreign Minister Lavrov, and I was just wondering if we could get a readout from your end.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, absolutely. They spoke this morning. The Secretary encouraged – the focus of the conversation was on Ukraine. The Secretary encouraged Foreign Minister Lavrov and his Russian colleagues to work with President-elect Poroshenko and the Ukrainian Government on a path forward. As you all know, we not only believe that it was a successful election in Ukraine, but we believe that that dialogue is the best path forward from here.

QUESTION: On that --

MS. PSAKI: Ukraine, or --

QUESTION: Yeah, yeah, on the call. The Russians say that Foreign Minister Lavrov asked Secretary Kerry to use his influence with the authorities in Kyiv to stop the counterterrorism operation, the military operation, in the east. Is that correct, one, and if it is, is the Administration willing to do such a thing?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I'm not going to readout, as you know, Foreign Minister Lavrov's comments or views. But I will say, as we've talked about a little bit in here, that we have a fundamental disagreement with the Russians about what the Ukrainian Government is doing and the validity of their own right to maintain calm and order in their own country. And in our view, since the beginning of the unrest, while we've seen numerous human rights abuses by the separatists, including murder, kidnapping, and looting, the Ukrainian Government has, continues to have, the responsibility to enforce law and order on its territory. And while unfortunate incidents will always happen in a combat zone, we commend and continue to commend the Ukrainian Government's restraint and efforts to limit damage and injury to the civilian population.

So our view has consistently been that they have every right to take steps to maintain law and order in their own country.

QUESTION: But you're acknowledging that there have been, as – what you call, “unfortunate incidents.”

MS. PSAKI: Well, there have been reports of them, Matt. Yes.

QUESTION: Right. But committed not just – committed by the Ukrainian military or by the separatists?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not placing blame. I'm suggesting that in any conflict like this that occurs. That's unfortunate. They've taken every step possible to exercise restraint while trying to maintain law and order in their own country.

QUESTION: Okay. So you believe – the Administration believes that the Ukrainian military has shown restraint in its operations in the east?

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Okay. And then do you – so when you talked about human rights abuses, what were you referring to before?

MS. PSAKI: By Russian separatists?

QUESTION: I don't know. I --

MS. PSAKI: That's what I was referring to.

QUESTION: So even though there have been unfortunate incidents, which you say – on both sides. Or am I mischaracterizing that? You believe there have been --

MS. PSAKI: There have been in general.

QUESTION: -- unfortunate incidents --

MS. PSAKI: Yes, on the ground. Yes.

QUESTION: -- on both sides – the – what you would term human rights abuses have come only at the hands of the separatists? Is that --

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we're – I know this is not your intention, but I don't – I'm not sure if there's a specific report you're referring to. We're not aware of one.

QUESTION: I – well, no. I'm just – I'm not referring to a specific report. I'm just referring to the – you said that there were human rights abuses committed. And then you said that there were unfortunate incidents, and I'm trying to --

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I'm referring to, Matt --

QUESTION: An unfortunate incident isn't necessarily a human rights abuse.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: You say that unfortunate incidents have occurred on both sides, but the actual abuses, which I presume have intent – there is intent behind a human rights abuse.

MS. PSAKI: I said, well, unfortunate incidents will always occur in combat zones.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: So yes, there have been reports which we believe to be true, that there have been injuries and losses of life on both sides. What I'm – but in our view, the vast, vast majority of our concern is – if not all of it – is about what we're seeing from the Russian separatists and --

QUESTION: Right. Okay, but so --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- the difference between an unfortunate incident and a human rights abuse, I think – correct me if I'm wrong – is intent, right? Is that what – an intention to commit an abuse, as opposed to an accident.

MS. PSAKI: Sure. That's --

QUESTION: And you don't see that the – any – that any of the unfortunate incidents committed by the Ukrainian military have been actual abuses. Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: That is our view. Yes.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: Could I just ask on – follow-up on what the Secretary said last night in his interview with PBS?

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: He mentioned that there had been some signs of Russian troops moving back to Moscow, not towards Kyiv, and that seems to be backed up this morning by NATO. They also said they've seen similar movements. Do you have more details? Do you have numbers? Is this encouraging? What's your reaction to --

MS. PSAKI: Certainly. Well, we continue to observe Russian troop activity in the vicinity of the border with Ukraine. Over two-thirds of the troops have now pulled back from the border. Several thousand troops still remain in the vicinity, but most of these units appear to be preparing to withdraw. Some units continue to be capable of operations at short notice. So if we see complete, comprehensive, and verifiable withdrawal we would welcome it. Obviously --

QUESTION: You can't welcome the steps that have already taken place?

MS. PSAKI: Let me finish, Elise. Obviously, these initial steps are positive, but we would like to see the full withdrawal, as you know, and that's what we've been consistently calling for.

QUESTION: So two-thirds of 40,000, which you estimated, it was about 40,000.

MS. PSAKI: Approximately two-thirds.

QUESTION: So two-thirds would bring us up to – sorry, my maths is atrocious. Help me out here.

QUESTION: Don't look at me. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: No one in here was a math major, I'm going to bet. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: It's a lot of troops that have been pulled back.

QUESTION: How far have they been pulled back? I mean --

QUESTION: Twenty-seven thousand.

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any other level of ground-game detail. This is obviously information that is being discussed through the interagency. DOD is probably the more appropriate place to go for that level of detail.

QUESTION: Okay, but it's – I thought that there was a question about whether they might be getting pulled back only a little ways and, I mean, you alluded to this possibility when you said some could go into quick action. And since you're the one who's talking about –

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- since it was the Secretary who said that they're heading toward Moscow --

MS. PSAKI: As others have said as well.

QUESTION: I know. But if you could endeavor to get an answer on whether you have any concerns that they're only pulling a little ways back rather than a long ways back.

MS. PSAKI: I will check. And my bet is we'll point you to – I mean, DOD has also spoken to this, so that's what I wanted to reference. And as Elise noted, we're also being careful here about how we characterize this, because we're obviously watching. There's more that needs to happen.

QUESTION: Do you characterize it as a pullback, though, or are you just – I mean, I suppose that goes to what Arshad's question was.

MS. PSAKI: Have pulled back from the border, yes. In terms of the exact distance, I don't have that level of detail. I will see if there's more specifics we can share.

QUESTION: But do you believe this is a de-escalation of tensions?

MS. PSAKI: This is the start of, but there's more that needs to happen, and obviously we want to see a complete, comprehensive, and verified withdrawal, and that's what we're waiting to see.

QUESTION: Right, but if you take it in the context of the – President Putin did say – endorse – not endorse, but accept the results of the election. The Russians have said that they want to work with the new government. It looks like the two presidents are going to meet shortly. And it does seem as if this is trending in the right direction, wouldn't you say?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Elise, what I'm trying to be careful of here is there have been a lot committed to – there has been a lot committed to verbally over the last several weeks, and we want to see a complete and verified withdrawal. We would like to see President Putin work with President-elect Poroshenko, so there's more that needs to be done and we'll continue to press for that in the days ahead.

QUESTION: Can I just go back to the restraint issue? The – you – I want to make sure I understand correctly. Your opinion is that the Ukrainian military is using restraint, so you do not see a need to urge the government to use restraint?

MS. PSAKI: We'd urge all sides in any conflict --

QUESTION: You still do?

MS. PSAKI: -- to use restraint.

QUESTION: Use restraint.

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely. But we would commend them for the restraint they've used to date.

QUESTION: Got you. All right, great, thanks.

...

QUESTION: -- on the role of foreign fighters in the Ukraine.

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: Okay, we're confused --

MS. PSAKI: In --

QUESTION: -- because yesterday --

MS. PSAKI: The Chechen.

QUESTION: Yeah. You said that in the call on Wednesday, Secretary Kerry raised the issue of Russia allowing Chechen fighters to go into Ukraine. But today, the Russians – or yesterday – were saying that there are 300 fighters that were trained in Syria that have crossed and fighting alongside government forces. Can you confirm --

MS. PSAKI: Trained --

QUESTION: -- did they talk about that?

MS. PSAKI: I'm sorry. Are you talking about two different things here, Said?

QUESTION: No, not two different things.

MS. PSAKI: Okay.

QUESTION: Because – the role of foreign fighters in the Ukraine. Because yesterday --

MS. PSAKI: The Chechens.

QUESTION: -- if I heard you correctly --

MS. PSAKI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- you said that the Secretary of State expressed his concern that Russia is allowing Chechen – or Chechnyan, whatever – fighters to go into Ukraine to fight alongside the separatists. Today, the Russians are saying exactly the opposite. They're saying that the foreign fighters are going in to fight alongside government forces and they come from Syria. Do you have anything on that, or --

MS. PSAKI: I'm not --

QUESTION: -- was that an issue that was raised?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not sure you have all of your facts completely right there, but --

QUESTION: I mean, I never have my – all of my facts --

MS. PSAKI: You often do, Said. (Laughter.) But let me kind of restate what – let me restate what is the – what are the facts here.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: Without a doubt, we've seen numerous reports that armed Chechen fighters have traveled from Russia to Donetsk to support Russia-backed separatists. Russian-backed separatists, as you know, is – are the armed militants we have been expressing concern about for weeks, months now. We're also talking about – they're not separate; they're related, obviously.

We're all talking about Ukraine – the troops on the border that have been gathered on the border for several weeks as well. So what I was just answering in response to Matt and Elise's question before was where those troops are located. We remain concerned about these Chechen fighters who have crossed the border to join the Russian separatists.

QUESTION: So you believe the Russians have some control over the Chechens?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think we --

QUESTION: Over the Chechen fighters that you say are going in?

MS. PSAKI: We do feel that there's a Russian hand involved, yes.

QUESTION: Right. Okay. Well, then why can't the Assad regime turn around and say: Well, you must have some control over your American who comes to – goes to Syria and blows himself up. I mean, these people don't necessarily act because their government or any other government tells them to do so.

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt --

QUESTION: You believe that this is an orchestrated, concerted thing and not just people going individually, making up – deciding they want to --

MS. PSAKI: I understand you like to compare things and that's one of your favorite things, and that's fine, but I would say that we see --

QUESTION: These are a few of my favorite things. (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: We – these are a few – you also like Buffalo sports teams. I would say that in our view, there's a difference here. What we're talking about – we've clearly condemned the actions or – of this American citizen. What we're talking about here is individuals, Chechen fighters, who have traveled from Russia in armed convoys and --

QUESTION: Right, so it's organized is what you're saying.

MS. PSAKI: Yes, it's a difference.

QUESTION: Okay.

...

QUESTION: Still on Ukraine and on the Chechen fighters, you don't have – do you have a figure for the number of fighters – Chechen fighters believed that have gone across the border?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have that level of detail, Jo.

Go ahead, Nicole.

QUESTION: I wanted to ask about President Putin's economic forum May 23rd --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- and reports on U.S. efforts to dissuade European and U.S. companies from attending.

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think a couple of weeks ago -- and so it's been consistent -- we've talked about this and I believe the White House also talked about the fact that there are regular conversations with business leaders. U.S. Government officials decided not to attend the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. Obviously, companies are going to make their own decisions, but -- and we believe that senior business executives traveling to Russia to make high-profile appearances with Russian Government officials at events such as this would send an inappropriate message given Russia's behavior. I'm not aware of outreach to companies outside of the United States, though. Obviously, companies have bases everywhere, but --

QUESTION: Right. Does -- can I infer that there was outreach to companies within the United States?

MS. PSAKI: We had a range of conversations, as has been confirmed several times by the Administration, but -- I'm just conveying that it's not new, but --

QUESTION: Okay. I did try and look for the transcripts but just couldn't, so --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, no, it's okay. I just wanted you to know the backstory.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: But I don't have any other further details. Obviously, companies, officials have also come out and stated why they are not planning to attend as well. So I point you to both of that --

QUESTION: Thanks.

MS. PSAKI: -- both of those.

...

QUESTION: -- as far as I remember, Ukrainian presidential election's official result just came out yesterday that -- saying Poroshenko won 54.7 percent of the votes. But didn't you guys officially admit that Poroshenko has won before that official result coming out?

MS. PSAKI: We actually put our statement out after the official results came out.

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you.

May 29, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia/Iran
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: Okay. So the Russians are aiding Chechen fighters to go to Ukraine? Is that the suggestion?

MS. PSAKI: Well, he expressed concern about what we've seen along those lines. There have been a range of reports, so that's what he was expressing concern about.

...

QUESTION: The President in the speech yesterday cited two examples of American leadership and strength, two of them being Ukraine and Iran. Isn't it a little early to be talking about that?

MS. PSAKI: I would argue the President doesn't give himself enough credit for what he's done around the world, and that's how the Secretary feels, too. We would not be engaged in comprehensive negotiations with Iran, which is where the program is stalled and is rolling back, if it were not for the role of the United States, along with the P5+1 partners, certainly. Ukraine – we've been engaged more or as much as any other country in the world in supporting the elections process, in supporting the government, in supporting their efforts moving forward. Yes, there's more work that needs to be done. The point is we need to continue to stay at it.

QUESTION: But isn't this a potential "Mission Accomplished" situation?

MS. PSAKI: Absolutely not.

QUESTION: Jen --

MS. PSAKI: Yeah.

QUESTION: You would argue the President doesn't give himself enough credit? How much credit would you give him?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think what I'm – I would give him more than he has given himself. That's what I just said.

QUESTION: What, like, 200 percent credit? (Laughter.)

MS. PSAKI: So would the Secretary.

QUESTION: For – and for --

QUESTION: Credit for what? I'm sorry. Credit for what?

QUESTION: -- for what? Yes, exactly. That's

QUESTION: No, I mean, I don't -- I don't mean, like, he doesn't deserve credit.

QUESTION: For the Iran negotiations? For --

QUESTION: I mean -- I'm talking, what specifically are you talking he doesn't get enough credit for? That's what I'm saying.

MS. PSAKI: For engagement in issues like Iran, what we've done on Ukraine, efforts to dive in and engage around the world.

QUESTION: Can we just stay on --

QUESTION: I mean, Russia has still annexed Crimea. I mean, Iran -- there's ongoing negotiations, but is that the success here that you're talking?

MS. PSAKI: We're talking about engagement in the world and taking on tough issues that present themselves. And the United States continues to play a prominent role doing that.

QUESTION: I just had a quick -- I had -- on two points that you made, one of which was you said that there was going to be a new approach on counterterrorism.

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I'm talking about is the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund that was announced --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: -- in the President's speech yesterday.

QUESTION: Right. That --

MS. PSAKI: And his speech, where he outlined that the threats we're facing are different than they were in a Iraq and -- a pre-Iraq and a pre-Afghanistan period, where we were focusing on decimating core al-Qaida. We know that these threats are scattered, and we need to adjust our approach accordingly.

QUESTION: Right. But can you tell us how? I mean --

MS. PSAKI: That's what we are going to continue to --

QUESTION: So --

MS. PSAKI: -- work through. But the fund --

QUESTION: That's what I was trying to figure --

QUESTION: As Matt was saying, these are not things that have already happened. These are things you're now working out.

MS. PSAKI: He announced -- obviously, we've taken --

QUESTION: That's a fund, yeah.

MS. PSAKI: -- a range of steps to address over the course of the last months and years. But again, this fund was just announced yesterday. We need to work through Congress, we need to work with our international partners, and we will be focused on that.

QUESTION: So can we expect at some point in the coming months you will then roll this out for us, so we actually have some concrete details?

MS. PSAKI: I am sure there'll be more to share about where the funding would go and how it would be used. There's a great deal of flexibility, which we see as a benefit. And I'm sure there'll be more to say in the coming months.

QUESTION: Okay. Just to pick up on one other thing you mentioned, you said that you're going to be working on Syria and helping the moderate opposition. You said there was some attractive language --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- in the bill or the draft bill in front of Congress. Could you point us to the attractive language?

MS. PSAKI: Sure. What I was referring to is there is language that Senator Levin offered to the NDAA. That language, a provision in the NDAA which -- or has already been approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee, would authorize the Secretary of Defense to provide equipment and training to vetted members of the Syrian opposition. And we look forward to continuing to work with Congress on that list.

QUESTION: Okay. So you're talking about -- are you now getting into details about talking about specific equipment with Congress?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, you need to have authorization in order to train and equip. This would provide that authorization. That's what we're working them -- with them on.

QUESTION: About this fund, the procedure about this fund that you mentioned -- so you said that you are talking with the partners on this fund.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Who will be in charge for the allocations of this fund? The Pentagon, DOD, or the State Department, or there will be another body?

MS. PSAKI: It's a Pentagon – the Pentagon would be in charge, but obviously the State Department would work with them, the White House. It's an – would be an interagency process, as I understand it.

QUESTION: So what kind of draft that you are working on for the approval in the Congress? Are you going to, for example, present the breakdown of this plan within the partners? Or what kind of details are we to expect?

MS. PSAKI: It's only 24 hours old, so we'll continue the discussions and consultations. And as more information is available, we will make that available to you when possible.

QUESTION: Jen, on the bill, you and officials speaking on background yesterday, quite a bit about this – about the attractive language that you just – this is in the Defense authorization bill, which could take months to get through. Would the Administration or would the State Department be in favor of perhaps taking Senator Levin's language out of that bill and making it a standalone item that could potentially get through the legislative process more quickly?

MS. PSAKI: It is a good question. Obviously, we're discussing a range of mechanisms with Congress. I don't want to speculate on those publicly. But I'm happy to check with our Hill team and see if there's more we want to say on that front.

QUESTION: Okay. And is it correct that train-and-equip programs, like the one being considered, require congressional authorization?

MS. PSAKI: Well, this type of a program, where this is provided, would require, yes.

QUESTION: You said that – so you said that there's attractive language, that you look forward to working with Congress. I mean, you could have proposed this language to Congress at any point. You could have said, "We want to train and equip," to Congress. "Can you give us the authorization to do that?"

I mean, it seems now like Congress is giving you the push to do it.

MS. PSAKI: I think there have been discussions in the Administration for months, as you know, about a range of options and mechanisms to support. The President's speech was a reflection of that yesterday. Support for this language is a reflection of that. I would remind you that we have ongoing discussions with Congress all the time, so –

...

QUESTION: The president-elect has called for direct U.S. military assistance. Is that something the Obama Administration is considering?

MS. PSAKI: Again, this President has approved three tranches of assistance. We'll continue to review their requests, but nothing has changed, in our view, of lethal assistance.

QUESTION: So on Ukraine. Do you have any comment or concern about the situation in the east right now in the wake of this helicopter being downed? And there's photographs that appear to show innocent civilians, including children, lying dead in the streets. The other day you said that you didn't have any particular concerns about the Ukrainian authorities' use of force, but you did have concerns about the separatists and you were urging the Russians to rein them in. Do you now – do you have concerns about the Ukrainian authority – the use of force by the Ukrainian authorities, or is it still the – are you still the same – in the same spot you were?

MS. PSAKI: Nothing has changed. Our broad view, as you know, is that de-escalation is the proper path forward, but many challenges remain on the ground. There's no question about that. As you noted, today heavily armed separatists in Slovyansk shot down a military transport helicopter, killing 14 people. Four OSCE observers that were abducted on May 26 have – continue to be held. Separatists reportedly, including many from Russia, attempted to seize the airport in Donetsk on Monday. So there are obviously a range of recent events in isolated areas that we remain concerned about and challenges remain.

QUESTION: But you still believe that the Ukrainian authorities are acting within their – they're acting appropriately within their right to maintain order in these clashes that are going on in the east?

MS. PSAKI: We still believe Ukrainian authorities have the right uphold law and order in their own country, yes.

QUESTION: And you don't believe that they're using disproportionate force or attacking civilians?

MS. PSAKI: That is not a concern I'm aware of.

QUESTION: Jen, the --

...

QUESTION: I think the Ukrainian authorities have announced that the inauguration for Poroshenko is going to be on June 7th. Do you have any indication as to whom might represent the United States at that?

MS. PSAKI: Not at this point. We do plan to be represented, but I don't have any announcements to make.

QUESTION: You wouldn't, would you?

MS. PSAKI: Hmm?

QUESTION: Wouldn't the White House make that announcement? Is there a presidential --

MS. PSAKI: You're so tied up with protocol, Matt. That is true. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Exactly.

...

QUESTION: Speaking of protocol, though, on Ukraine. A couple Russian publications but also The Washington Post have published cables that were released by -- came out from WikiLeaks about U.S. diplomats' rather unfavorable view of the president-elect back when he was -- before he was the foreign minister. Do you know if those -- if the concerns expressed by people like Ambassador Herbst about Mr. Poroshenko still exist?

MS. PSAKI: I have not heard those concerns expressed, nor have I discussed those cables with people currently in the Administration.

...

QUESTION: Do you believe whatever the Ukrainian Government's strategy is, is working? I was there. I just came back. I saw how Crimea was -- I was there for two months. I saw how was Crimea was taken away and the world was watching. And I saw how the east, people in the east wanted to vote. A lot of people in eastern Ukraine wanted to vote, and they couldn't. I was in Slovyansk and I saw how the army was suffering, trying to get back that city. But apparently they had no good strategy because they were bombing checkpoints and going instead of seizing them. So the separatists would come back. There was a lot of chaos there on the ground among people. And it's been going on for a long time. And it seems like the more it goes, the worse it gets and the more likely it is like a civil war instead of just whatever you --

MS. PSAKI: You can't have a civil war when it's Ukrainians supporting Ukraine, and you have Russian separatists from the outside coming in and wreaking havoc in some parts eastern Ukraine.

QUESTION: But they're using the insider -- the separatists that are Ukrainian separatists. They don't --

MS. PSAKI: I think there's some argument about that question.

QUESTION: As human shields.

MS. PSAKI: Let -- our view here is that there was a successful election with a high turnout. There were certainly some challenges --

QUESTION: In the west, not in the east.

MS. PSAKI: There were some challenges. There was – even in some areas where Russian separatists were attempting to prevent people from voting, they still voted. But across the country, 60 percent – there was a 60 percent turnout, which is a high level of turnout. Where we are now is we’re focused on moving forward. And president-elect Poroshenko has announced that his number one priority will be to restore order in eastern Ukraine by increasing dialogues with citizens of the region. He’s going to be traveling to the area soon after the inauguration, and we’re hopeful that that will be – lead to a positive path forward.

...

QUESTION: Your view is that everyone – that all Ukrainians in all of Ukraine excluding Crimea are for the president elect, and that anyone who is opposed and is conducting --

MS. PSAKI: No, that is --

QUESTION: -- is doing – creating mayhem, is --

MS. PSAKI: That is not at all what I was suggesting. But I --

QUESTION: But you seem to be suggesting that all the separatists are actually Russian and not Ukrainians. That’s what I thought I heard, at least. Correct me if I’m wrong.

MS. PSAKI: I think the Russian separatists – Russian-supported separatists, however you want to refer to it – are – I wasn’t suggesting that. I don’t think we know the origin of a lot of these individuals. We’ve seen people cross borders; there’s a lot of questions that have been raised.

QUESTION: So – okay. So is it correct then that you are concerned that people from outside Ukraine, people who are not Ukrainian citizens, are going into Ukraine and fighting on the separatist side. Is that correct?

MS. PSAKI: Well, look at the reports of Chechnyans coming across the border.

QUESTION: That’s what I just wanted to make sure.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.) I was there. I saw them.

MS. PSAKI: Yeah. No, sure, absolutely.

QUESTION: Yes.

May 27, 2014

Jen Psaki, Spokesperson

Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine

Washington, DC

QUESTION: Ukraine. You have seen reports, I presume, of the fighting that's going on in Donetsk. I'm wondering if you have anything to say about that.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm. Well, first, let me of course – I know we put out a statement from the Secretary yesterday about the successful elections this weekend, so I would point everyone to that. We look forward to, of course, working with President-elect Poroshenko and the people of Ukraine to build on this victory for democracy.

In terms of the events over the weekend or the reports of violence, we certainly have been watching those events closely. We remain concerned about the actions of Russian separatists against civilians in eastern Ukraine. We support the efforts of the Government of Ukraine to maintain calm and take steps to maintain order in their own country, and we remain in close contact with them as well.

QUESTION: Well, so you believe that this violence is the responsibility entirely of pro-Russian separatists? Is that – I mean, do you have any words of caution or advice of restraint to the Ukrainian Government?

MS. PSAKI: Well, certainly to all parties. But I would remind you – and obviously there are a range of reports out there about events that have happened over the course of the past couple of days. There are some involving the airport.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: There are some involving the fact that a special monitoring mission is missing. So there are a range of different reports, different – and I guess I could speak to all of those. But my point I was making is that the Ukrainian Government and the Ukrainian authorities have every right to certainly take steps to maintain calm and order where they see fit.

QUESTION: Right. But you don't have any concerns about whether they are acting – that they're going too far? You don't have any concern that – do you believe that everything the Ukrainian authorities have done to this point in trying to maintain law and order has been reasonable and appropriate?

MS. PSAKI: Well, if we have concerns we will express them. But certainly --

QUESTION: But as of this moment, you don't have any concerns?

MS. PSAKI: I'm not expressing a concern about the events over the course of the weekend, no, in terms of the Ukrainian authorities, no.

QUESTION: Okay. So in the view of the State Department, view of the Administration, is that what is happening on the ground in the east right now, in Donetsk and other places where there are clashes, where there's fighting, that is all the fault of the separatists?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, Matt, obviously --

QUESTION: They are the instigators?

MS. PSAKI: Obvious -- they are -- certainly, we believe they're the instigators, yes. And we believe -- and I think there's broad reporting on their involvement in what's happening at the airport or what happened at the airport over the course of the weekend.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: I think there's a -- much question about that.

QUESTION: Well, but there are a lot of reports from my news organization, from others as well, that this isn't entirely one-sided, that -- and I mean, the separatists -- some of the separatists leaders say that they've been -- that the Ukrainian authorities have been shooting at civilians. But you don't -- you haven't seen that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, if we have concerns, we'll express them.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: But that's not where we are at this moment --

QUESTION: All right.

MS. PSAKI: Do we --

QUESTION: And then do you have --

MS. PSAKI: Oh, go ahead.

QUESTION: Just on the OSCE monitors.

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: Do you have anything more to say about that?

MS. PSAKI: We don't have a new update, unfortunately, for all of you. The OSCE reports that it has lost contact -- that it lost contact Monday evening with one of its special monitoring

mission teams in the Donetsk region. The four-person team was last heard from as they approached a separatist checkpoint near the city of Torez. We condemn this abduction and call for Russia to use its influence with the militants to secure the team's immediate release.

This team, this particular team, has been observing the situation across Ukraine since March to reduce tensions and promote security, so they weren't kind of a new election monitoring --

QUESTION: Okay. But you're convinced, again, that this is -- that they have been abducted by the separatists? That that's the -- I mean, do you know that for certain, or is that just the most plausible explanation you have?

MS. PSAKI: That is the most plausible explanation, yes, Matt.

QUESTION: Is there any --

MS. PSAKI: Go ahead.

QUESTION: Staying on Ukraine, is there any evidence that Russia's hand is still in -- is part of any of this fighting that's going on from the separatists' side?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think there's been evidence all along that there has been a Russian hand in the activities that have been happening on the ground, whether it's the -- how equipped the militants have been, what their equipped with, kind of a trend that we've seen from Crimea that has carried forth to parts of eastern Ukraine. So we've seen a great deal of evidence on the ground of their engagement.

QUESTION: And today Russian President Putin called for an immediate halt to the Ukraine's military operations, and he expressed this to the Italians. And he said that he called for Ukraine to talk to the Russian separatist leaders. Would you support that kind of dialogue to try to resolve this? Or I mean, there's a possibility this could just escalate, so how is the U.S. seeing this being resolved?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, our primary goal here has been de-escalation from the beginning. But I would remind you that there are a range of calls that President Putin and others have been made that have not been backed up by action in terms of taking their own de-escalatory steps. And we certainly feel there are a range of steps that they could take in order to show they're going to back their words with action. We eagerly await that.

I would also point you to the fact that President-elect Poroshenko made clear that his number one priority after taking office will be to restore order in eastern Ukraine by increasing dialogue with citizens of that region, traveling to the area soon after his inauguration, increasing transparency of the ongoing constitutional reform process. And so we believe that's a positive step and the right approach to return stability to the area.

QUESTION: Jen, real quick on the monitors, do you know their nationalities?

MS. PSAKI: I do not have that information, no.

QUESTION: I mean, sorry if you just went over this while I was walking in.

MS. PSAKI: It's okay. Go ahead.

QUESTION: But I mean, have you urged the Ukrainians to use restraint in their military operations? I mean --

MS. PSAKI: Certainly, Elise, we've urged that across the board. But let's not forget we're talking about a group of armed militants, armed Russian militants, who have been aggressively engaging in, whether it's taking over of buildings or going -- attacking airports. The Ukrainians have every right to defend and maintain stability and order in their own country, and that's our belief.

QUESTION: But I mean, there has been a concern that they've -- that perhaps the Ukrainians would use, like, disproportional force against these militants.

MS. PSAKI: Well again, Elise, as we have concerns, we'll express them. But I think there's no question in our view that they have every right to maintain stability or take steps to maintain stability within their own country.

...

QUESTION: Following up on Lesley's question and your assertion of a Russian hand in previous activities in eastern Ukraine, as you know, it was not possible for all the people in eastern Ukraine to vote, that some of the polling places were not open. Is your assessment that Russia had a hand in encouraging separatists to close some of those polling places and thus obstruct voting in eastern Ukraine? Is that your assessment or is that not your assessment?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there's no question that we feel there's a strong tie and there's a Russian hand in the actions of the armed militants in eastern Ukraine. And to the degree they took steps to hinder or prevent voting, we feel there's a connection.

I would also note, though, that despite all of that, more than 60 percent of eligible voters in Ukraine voted on May 25th, which is a significant turnout, and one we have noted and the OSCE has noted. But this is a discussion we'll continue to have internally about -- based on the evidence on the ground about what steps were taken, what the involvement of Russia was, and we'll make decisions accordingly.

QUESTION: But are -- I'm sorry.

MS. PSAKI: It's okay.

QUESTION: Are you asserting that Russia played a role in obstructing the voting in eastern Ukraine? Because it sort of sounds like you are.

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I'm asserting is that there is no question that armed militants played a role, as we've seen evidence of across the board. We've long believed and stated that there is a connection between Russia and these militants. We'll continue to evaluate what specific role they played. That's an ongoing discussion in the Administration now.

...

QUESTION: Jen, previously, elections were a sort of trigger for sectoral sanctions against Russia in terms of if Russia – you were saying that if Russia disrupts elections, there will be sectoral sanctions. So the elections are held. Are sanctions – sectoral sanctions still on the table? And if they are, are there any new triggers or --

MS. PSAKI: Well, they remain on the table. They've been on the table since the President signed the executive order several weeks ago. There's – I have no decisions or announcements to discuss today.

QUESTION: But you did – but the President, and when he was with Chancellor Merkel, did say that interfering in the election would be the trigger for the sanctions. So the question I think Michael was getting at and --

MS. PSAKI: Sure.

QUESTION: -- Lesley is getting at is: Was Russia's involvement – you talk about that there's these strong ties between the Russian militants, but did Russia specifically take enough steps to disrupt the election to incur these sanctions? And I don't remember if you said whether that an effort to disrupt the election was a trigger or whether they actually disrupt the election, which it doesn't seem that they did if you're acknowledging the results.

MS. PSAKI: Well, what I would say and what I was trying to address to Michael is that that's a discussion that – we have these tools and we have the ability to put in place additional sanctions. We'll be coordinating with the EU, as we have been all along, but we'll evaluate over the coming days whether there are additional steps that need to be taken.

QUESTION: But it doesn't – it seems to me like you're saying that through their ties to these separatists, that Russia might have attempted to disrupt the election. But given the fact that you've acknowledged as – you've praised these elections and accepted them and recognized them and are moving ahead, it doesn't seem like they actually did disrupt them.

MS. PSAKI: Well, but I also noted, and it's important to note again, that there – despite the strong turnout across Ukraine, there was chaos and violence perpetrated by pro-Russian militants in certain areas, as you know. So we'll take a close look at that, and again, I have nothing to outline today, but we'll continue that discussion internally.

QUESTION: So when you're looking at specifically that, are you looking at if there was a deliberate attempt by Russia to – I mean, I'm just trying to figure, when you're looking and

evaluating that, what is it that you're looking for? Because these just could be the rebels that are causing mischief, right? It doesn't mean that Russia's deliberately in there and stoking it up. I mean, is that the kind of evaluation you would look at?

MS. PSAKI: Well, again, these were pro-Russian militants who were the perpetrators of the chaos and violence in some parts – limited parts – of Ukraine. We'll look at that. We'll look at any of the connections. But I don't have kind of a five-point checklist to lay out for you because it's all part of the discussion that will happen internally.

QUESTION: Can I – now I'm a little bit confused.

MS. PSAKI: Okay. Sorry. Go ahead.

QUESTION: Well, I'm just – I mean, are – sectoral sanctions for alleged attempts to disrupt the election are still a possibility? Is that --

MS. PSAKI: We said that, and if they cross the border; there are a range of factors that we're looking at.

QUESTION: No, no, no, but specifically about the election, those sanctions are still on the table? I mean, it seems to me if you call the election a victory for democracy, any attempt to disrupt it was unsuccessful, no?

MS. PSAKI: Well, Matt, we will continue to have these discussions internally. There were attempts to disrupt in parts of Ukraine. We will look at what that means and if it means anything in terms of a next round of sanctions.

QUESTION: In other words, you're saying that attempts to disrupt, even if they are unsuccessful, could be a trigger for sanctions?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there were successful attempts to disrupt in some parts of Ukraine, whether --

QUESTION: Yet you still acknowledge the elections?

MS. PSAKI: Of course, because there was a high turnout nationwide, and we feel this was a successful election. But we'll look at a range of factors. I don't have anything to announce or outline for all of you today.

QUESTION: Are you aware of any truce that may have just taken place in Donetsk between the militants and the Ukrainian Government?

MS. PSAKI: Any true? I'm sorry.

QUESTION: Any truce? There --

MS. PSAKI: Truce?

QUESTION: Truce, a truce in the fighting?

MS. PSAKI: I have not seen those reports.

QUESTION: Okay. Are you aware of the numbers that were killed as a result of the bombardment of the Ukrainian air force?

MS. PSAKI: We have seen a range of numbers. Yes, we've seen a range of numbers.

QUESTION: Okay. Can you share with us these numbers?

MS. PSAKI: I don't have any to confirm for you. There's a range of reports out there, Said. Do we have any – Ukraine or – okay. Go ahead, both of you on Ukraine.

QUESTION: President Obama soon goes to Poland, and as I understand, the newly elected president of Ukraine also. Is there a meeting planning – planned between them, do you know?

MS. PSAKI: I would point you to the White House for the President's schedule. I don't think they've outlined that quite yet.

QUESTION: Okay.

...

QUESTION: Now we have a newly elected president to Ukraine – for Ukraine. What you are expecting in the coming days and weeks? What is going to be changed in the relation between United States and Ukraine? Is there any different from what was before Saturday?

MS. PSAKI: Well, as you know, we've long been supportive of not just the interim government, which we felt was the legitimate Government of Ukraine, but also the process leading up to an election and all of the steps that were taken by the OSCE, by the Ukrainian Government to ensure as many people could vote as who were interested in voting.

But I would point you to what President-elect Poroshenko stated about his priorities, about moving things forward, and I would also point you to the readout of President Obama's call that he did with President-elect Poroshenko over the weekend, where he stressed the importance of quickly implementing the reforms necessary for Ukraine to bring the country together and to develop a sustainable economy, attractive investment climate, and a transparent and accountable government that is responsive to the concerns and aspirations of all Ukrainians. So we will continue to work with them in the coming weeks on all of those areas of --

QUESTION: One of the reasons that I'm asking this question, because for a while you were raising the issue of the necessity of constitutional reform --

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: -- is -- are there steps taken in that regard? Or it's like --

MS. PSAKI: They've been ongoing and we anticipate they will continue.

QUESTION: There is another -- my last question is regarding in the last 24 hours, once again it was raised the issue of the necessity or the importance to support or provide Ukrainian with the lethal weapons to face the reality, the so-called -- whether you call them separatists or terrorists, do you have any intention or reviewing going on regarding this point?

MS. PSAKI: Well, the President has approved three tranches of nonlethal security assistance to the Ukrainian military and border services so far. We continue to review additional Ukrainian requests. Our main focus continues to be on supporting economic and diplomatic efforts. We don't see a military solution as the outcome to this crisis, but we -- and we're not considering lethal assistance, but we'll continue to review their requests.

QUESTION: Wait a second. You don't consider a military solution? You don't believe there's a military -- why are you saying that the Ukrainian Government has -- is doing the right thing in going after the authorities of --

MS. PSAKI: Because we believe, Matt, that maintaining stability and order in their own country --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. PSAKI: -- they have every right to do that.

QUESTION: Right. But isn't that a military solution?

MS. PSAKI: That is not a military solution.

QUESTION: No? Okay.

MS. PSAKI: We still believe this will be resolved through dialogue between the parties --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. PSAKI: -- which is what we'll continue to encourage.

May 23, 2014

Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Ukraine/Russia/China
Washington, DC**

QUESTION: On Ukraine, Russia – you probably saw President Putin’s comments today --

MS. HARF: I did see a number of them.

QUESTION: -- in which he said, “We will treat the choice of the Ukrainian people with respect.” Is that your reading that he’s going – what is your reading from that? He also says that he wants better ties with the West. (Laughter.) I mean, there were mixed messages in that speech, but overall did you --

MS. HARF: Mixed messages is a --

QUESTION: -- get a better sense?

MS. HARF: -- good way to put it. Well look, on the first question, we would welcome Russian acknowledgment and acceptance of the election results, which are – the election’s preparing to move forward on the 25th. In a vast majority of the country they’re ready to have them, and where it’s been challenging, the Ukrainian Government’s working to do the best they can to still allow people to vote.

But at the same time, we would encourage Russia to use its influence with separatists to urge them to cease their violent activities and lay down their arms. I mean, we’ve seen – particularly in a couple places in the east – these separatists trying purposefully to disrupt the elections with violence, taking over of government buildings, taking ballot boxes, taking voter registration lists. So if they will recognize the results of the election that’s a good thing, but they need to call on their – the separatists that they have influence with to not try to disrupt the election. You kind of can’t have it both ways.

QUESTION: So it wasn’t enough to satisfy you that he’s --

MS. HARF: Well, no. I mean, I did say that if they acknowledged and accept the results of the election that would be a good thing.

And your second question was --

QUESTION: Well actually, can I have another follow-up on this?

MS. HARF: You can.

QUESTION: One is regarding a pullback – Russia says it's pulling back equipment from the border. Today the Russian military general staff said it would take about 20 days to move the military temporarily deployed near the border. Have you seen any signs? Are you more convinced that that is taking place?

MS. HARF: Well, we have seen some movement, but it's too early to know where or how many of these forces are actually moving out for good. And regardless of, I think, what people would call sort of initial movement or initial stirrings, the force that remains on the border is very large and very capable, and remains in a very coercive position and posture.

So we've seen some signs. But again, this force amassed is just so great that they really need to take steps a little quicker.

QUESTION: Marie, you spoke about the separatists. Do you have any doubt that they are not completely under the control of the Russians, the Russian Government?

MS. HARF: Well, I don't think I ever said they were completely under the control of the Russian Government. I said that the Russian Government should use its influence with these separatist groups to encourage them to stop the violence, get out of the government buildings they've occupied. We know the Russian Government has influence and we believe that it should use it.

...

QUESTION: It's about the – a follow-up to her question that Putin actually also said some comments on President Obama. Have you got any reaction to that?

MS. HARF: I didn't hear those. What did he say about the President? I actually didn't hear them. I didn't hear the ones about President Obama.

...

QUESTION: Yeah, also. You said that you are concerned about the possibility of disruption of the elections. What other concerns do you have about the process itself? I mean, it's like the participation, the number of the participant or all these thing.

MS. HARF: Well, I would again note that in a vast majority of Ukraine preparations are on track. A vast majority of Ukraine is, quite frankly, calm. So this is a very small portion, and particularly in two cities in the east where separatists have kidnapped poll workers, they've threatened poll workers, they've stolen official documents. And the Ukrainian Government is working on alternative solutions to make sure people can vote in these areas.

So again, I would reiterate that it is a very, very small number. I actually have a number here. I think there are 213 district election commissions nationwide. It does not include Crimea. Obviously that's a little bit different circumstance. And according to the Central Election Commission, only 18 of these commissions have been unable to complete much of their prep

work because they're in these two cities where the separatists have really tried to disrupt them. So that is a very small number; would reiterate how most of Ukraine, a vast majority of it, is really ready for these elections.

QUESTION: My second question is regard to the outcome of the election. First, do you have any concern about the outcome of the election?

MS. HARF: What do you mean about the outcome?

QUESTION: I mean who is coming up, who is coming down. I mean it's with the outcome.

MS. HARF: Well, we certainly will support who the Ukrainian people – working with who the Ukrainian people choose.

QUESTION: And the other question, related: Do you believe that this new election, the outcome of the election, is going to change any – the reality on the ground, or not?

MS. HARF: Well, we certainly hope that it does.

QUESTION: Or what it's going to add to the reality on the ground?

MS. HARF: Well, look, I think the Ukrainian people standing up and choosing their leaders will show very clearly to Russia and to the rest of the world that they get to pick their future, that what Russia has tried to do goes against basic international norms, international law, and that there's nothing more powerful than people standing up and choosing their leaders. And that's why this is such an important election for the people of Ukraine. That's why we need to get a government in there and keep moving forward to hopefully get in a better place.

...

QUESTION: One, if you're willing to support and work with whoever the people of Ukraine choose, and if it's true that there's nothing more powerful than the people of their own country – I mean, they did have an election and they elected a president who was then toppled.

MS. HARF: Well, he fled.

QUESTION: Well, he was ousted.

MS. HARF: He packed up and left in the middle of the night.

QUESTION: Whether he --

MS. HARF: He fled.

QUESTION: The circumstances of his departure are not really – I don't know if they're germane to this discussion. The point is that the people of Ukraine did vote and did elect him, and --

MS. HARF: And well, but there was also a process by which he was removed from power --

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: -- that's part of their own internal political process.

QUESTION: So --

MS. HARF: So that was done through their political process.

QUESTION: Okay. So your – so again, you would reject the idea that President Putin again raised today that there was a coup?

MS. HARF: Absolutely.

QUESTION: Are you so sure that this election is going to be free and fair and credible that you are prepared to say now that you're going to respect the results, whatever they are?

MS. HARF: I said we'll work with whoever the Ukrainian people decide.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: We'll look at what happens. As I said though, preparations have taken place. There are an unprecedented number of monitors across the country here. So obviously, we know they've put a lot of effort into making these elections go forward.

QUESTION: Right. But you can't predict now with 100 percent certainty --

MS. HARF: We can't predict what will happen, no.

QUESTION: -- that this election is not going to be problematic?

MS. HARF: Well, I don't have indications that it will be.

QUESTION: Right. But --

MS. HARF: So I don't want to give the impression that I do.

QUESTION: Right. But --

MS. HARF: We know that there are separatists trying to disrupt the election.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: Particularly in parts of the east. That's a huge concern for us. But one of the reasons I noted this vast majority of the country that's calm, that people aren't trying to disrupt it, where people are going to go the ballot box on the 25th and pick their next leader.

QUESTION: Right. But if you are – but if you can say with certainty that if they, meaning the Russians, acknowledge and accept the results of the elections, that would be a good thing --

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: -- that would seem to suggest that you already believe or already are pretty sure or already are 100 percent sure that everything is going to be hunky-dory and fine, no?

MS. HARF: I didn't say hunky-dory and fine.

QUESTION: Well, but --

MS. HARF: Not when we've seen the kind of violence we've seen against poll workers. But that in – again, 100 percent certainty, that's ridiculous to say.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: But what I have said is that, look, this – there – Ukraine is ready for this election. There are people trying to disrupt it. The Ukrainian Government is trying to take steps to make sure those people in those small areas can vote. But Ukraine is ready for this. There are going to be monitors there. They've set up polling stations. A vast majority of the country, they're ready for it.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: That's what I can say.

QUESTION: All right.

QUESTION: Is there anything that could happen that would dissuade you from recognizing this thing as a fair, free --

MS. HARF: I don't even --

QUESTION: I mean, what do you expect --

MS. HARF: I don't even want to venture to guess about that.

QUESTION: Right. But the supposition or the assumption that you seem to be making is that the Ukrainians are going to go the polls, they're going to elect a – they're going to vote for a candidate who is pro-Western, shall we say.

MS. HARF: I'm not making that assumption.

QUESTION: Well --

MS. HARF: I'm saying that what we've always said is we don't support one person or one party or one candidate; we support the process and the Ukrainian people.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: Not us, not the Russians, no one else picking their leader.

QUESTION: And so, once again, I just want to make sure. And you reject the idea that the process that drove or that ousted or removed Yanukovich, that was a legitimate process --

MS. HARF: The process where members of his own party voted to remove him from power.

QUESTION: -- that was a legitimate -- okay.

MS. HARF: I reject that notion, yes.

QUESTION: All right. Gotcha, okay. One more. This is a follow-up to this question about these journalists that are detained.

MS. HARF: Uh-huh.

QUESTION: This morning the State Department hosted a Google+ Hangout on the election, and this subject was raised. And one of the participants in it, who was a woman who is affiliated with a pro-democracy group in Kyiv, --

MS. HARF: Okay.

QUESTION: -- rejected the notion that these people are legitimate journalists, which is something that you guys have at least raised questions about. I don't know if you've made a decision or not. But she called them information terrorists --

MS. HARF: All right.

QUESTION: -- and said that --

MS. HARF: Sorry, I didn't see the Hangout.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: Sorry.

QUESTION: She called them information terrorists and suggested that they weren't reporting news, that they were intentionally distorting and lying and giving a 100 percent wrong impression in the Russian media about what was going on. And I'm just wondering if you agree with that assessment.

MS. HARF: I don't think I would use the term that she used --

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: -- to be fair. But what we have said about these two journalists who are still detained is that they had fake journalist credentials and they had weapons in the trunk of their car.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

QUESTION: You're now sure of that? Because before it was reports that --

MS. HARF: Well, it's reports, yeah. I mean, I don't have any evidence to the contrary. We're still looking into all the details, to be clear.

QUESTION: Okay. Do you know if the Ukrainian authorities have gotten back to you on your request? I'm operating under the assumption that, based on what Jen has said earlier, that you talked to the Ukrainians and said, look, if these guys are legitimate journalists --

MS. HARF: Yeah, you should let them go.

QUESTION: -- you should let them -- is that correct?

MS. HARF: Yes, absolutely.

QUESTION: But do you know if --

MS. HARF: I think that we called on them to investigate it. I don't know if we've gotten an update from them on this.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: But again, I don't think when most of you work overseas, you carry MANPADs in your trunk. But separately, on the second part of your question, not specifically on these journalists, but we have seen an incredible amount of propaganda. We've talked about it a lot. The Secretary has mentioned it. We've talked about it here. I'm not talking about these two journalists because I don't know the details there, but it has been a concern. Absolutely.

QUESTION: Right. Are you --

MS. HARF: But we don't think people should be thrown in jail for it.

QUESTION: You don't think people should be thrown in jail for --

MS. HARF: For propaganda. Now, again, we've asked them to look into this case; if they're legitimate journalists, they should be let go.

QUESTION: But again, you mentioned just a little while ago that they were found with MANPAD – with weapons in their trunk. You're 100 percent sure that's the case?

MS. HARF: I didn't say – you're all about percentages today.

QUESTION: Well, I mean, are you --

MS. HARF: That's the report we received. Again, we're still looking for the Ukrainian Government to investigate it. I don't think we have 100 percent on all the facts yet. If it turns out that they were legitimate journalists, we've said they should be released.

QUESTION: Okay. And then just the last one on this, this fake press pass idea or fake credentials. I mean, these were credentials that were issued by --

MS. HARF: The Donetsk People's Republic, which --

QUESTION: Right, which you don't --

MS. HARF: -- does not exist.

QUESTION: -- which you say doesn't exist. But reporters in a lot of different warzone situations have to travel, have to get passes from various militia, various whoever, and I --

MS. HARF: That's true.

QUESTION: Do you – that doesn't necessarily mean the credential is fake. I mean, the Donetsk People's Republic, whether you recognize it or not, believes that it's – believes that these are legitimate credentials.

MS. HARF: Well, who is the Donetsk People's Republic?

QUESTION: Well, I don't know, but I mean --

MS. HARF: Right, but I mean that's --

QUESTION: But look, in Beirut there were militias – there were neighborhood militias that you had to have a --

MS. HARF: I understand, but I don't think those reporters in Beirut had MANPADs in their trunk either.

QUESTION: Well, I don't --

MS. HARF: Maybe.

QUESTION: So there again, you just said that they had MANPADs in their trunk, but --

MS. HARF: No, I said I don't think reporters in Beirut did.

QUESTION: Right, but that makes the -- then you suggest that these ones did.

MS. HARF: There were reports that they did. Yes, we've said there were.

QUESTION: I don't know if they did or not, but you're saying that it's a fact that they did.

MS. HARF: Matt, look, the point on this is, yes, they had credentials that appeared to be fake. And I understand how when journalists are operating in dangerous places, there are different credentials. I totally understand that. I'm not sure that's what we're talking about here. That's why we've asked for more facts.

QUESTION: Okay. All right. Okay. And as far as you know, you haven't gotten them yet?

MS. HARF: That's my understanding. I'll see if there's an update.

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you.

...

QUESTION: In an interview with -- in St. Petersburg, he was asked about that President Obama is saying that he is lying about Russian involvement in Ukraine, and he said, who is he to judge, and that if he wants to be a judge, why doesn't he find a job in a court or something like that? So do you have any reaction to that?

MS. HARF: Well, first I would say that as the leader of the United States, he cares very deeply about international law and international norms. That's a big part of his job as the leader of this country, as our Commander-in-Chief, as someone who goes to the UN General Assembly every fall and talks to the rest of the countries in the world about how we all live up to our obligations and how we all play by the same rules and how we uphold international norms.

So I think that that's an exactly appropriate thing for him to comment on, and I would take notion with the fact that if there's no Russian involvement in Ukraine, pull the rest of your troops back then. Put your money where your words are. Come on.

QUESTION: Yeah, but the troops are on the Russian side of the border, correct?

MS. HARF: There are a number of troops amassed on the Russian side of the border. They've also annexed Crimea, which is part of Ukraine, and the separatists, the pro-Russian separatists, wreaking such havoc right now in the east have a great deal of influence in – are influenced a great deal by President Putin and by the Russian Government. So I think it just defies logic. A lot of things he said in that article do.

QUESTION: And about your sanctions, he said that, like, why?

MS. HARF: Because you don't get to break the rules and get away with it. That's not how it works. In 2014, you don't get to annex another country's land, amass your troops on the border, create instability – which, by the way, he also said something about how Crimea is unstable today because of our actions. Well, Crimea was stable before Russia annexed it. Let's remind people of that. It was calm. This all happened because of what the Russians did.

So I think that something that's very important to us, again, is the notion that there are rules, there's international norms, there's international law, and if you break them, there will be consequences. And what you've seen with Russia is the rest of the world united in saying that's not acceptable and that's not okay. And to be fair, there will be further consequences if this action escalates or continues.

QUESTION: Are these sanctions going to affect the deal with China?

MS. HARF: The gas deal?

QUESTION: Yeah.

MS. HARF: Our sanctions? I don't know how ours would. I mean, you heard the Secretary speak about this in his press avail in Mexico. This is something that's been – they've been talking about for a decade, don't really see it related to this. But I think what you have seen is Russia increasingly isolated from the rest of the international system by our sanctions, by EU sanctions. You really have seen them start to be cut off, and that's not what the Russian people want. That's not what's best for the Russian economy. And we've said if there are further actions, we're looking at other sanctions, including sectoral sanctions.

QUESTION: Change of subject?

QUESTION: Well, hold on. I just want to – we have seen them become more isolated? I mean, President Putin just had a huge international conference.

MS. HARF: Their economy has become much more isolated. Their credit ranking has gone down.

QUESTION: Right.

MS. HARF: They aren't – their money is – their currency is falling. They aren't able to do business in many places they wanted to be able to do before. Yes, and that will increasingly become the case. Businesses don't want to do business there. They can bring people together for a conference; that doesn't mean people will want to do business with Russia today.

QUESTION: Okay. Well, I mean, that may be the case.

MS. HARF: Yeah.

QUESTION: I just don't – is there anything that you have to back that up?

MS. HARF: Well, I think the statistics we've seen from their economic indicators have been increasingly negative since this started, so --

QUESTION: Well, I mean, I noticed that --

MS. HARF: I haven't seen anything tangible to come out of the St. Petersburg event in terms of changing their economic outlook.

QUESTION: Well, I mean, they just signed an \$800 billion gas deal with China, so --

MS. HARF: Right, which they've been talking about for 10 years, and again, doesn't change our assessment of their economic situation.

QUESTION: No, I – right. Okay. But you're not aware if there are new statistics that would show this isolation?

MS. HARF: I think we've seen it in the statistics for the last few months. I haven't seen anything otherwise, no.

QUESTION: Right, but what I'm talking about is I haven't heard from – at least from the U.S. Government, from you guys or Treasury or the White House, any new – I mean, after the China gas deal went through, I mean, at least Gazprom stock went up.

MS. HARF: I don't think it has – I don't think it's changed our long – or medium-term projections about the Russian economy in any way. And I think one thing to keep in mind is in some ways, this is a medium-term and long-term game, right, that the Russian economy – the longer sanctions are in place, the more damage they do to your economy. We've seen that other places as well.

QUESTION: Well, you're referring to Iran.

MS. HARF: In one instance, yeah. So the longer sanctions are in place, the more damage they do, the more isolated you become. We put more on; other countries put more on. And that's not the direction that we think is best for the Russian economy, but that's their choice to make.

QUESTION: Change of subject?

QUESTION: Are you concerned that this gas deal may actually bring the Russians and the Chinese much closer together, and they can actually ally themselves with countries like Iran and other places – and other --

MS. HARF: I think that's a really simplistic read of it, Said. I think this is something they've been working on for 10 years. It's a business deal, quite frankly. Russia needs some of these resources. So I don't think in any way geopolitically or strategically it changes the question you asked right there.